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Class: A Four Letter Word

BY GARY COX

After the Palmer Raids, early in the 20th century, business unions completed purging their ranks of "reds" and the word "class" was determined to be "red" rhetoric and surgically removed from labor union discussion in this country. The powerful cheered, shook hands with a squeaky clean labor movement, and May 1 became Law Day in the United States while the rest of the world honored the Haymarket martyrs by celebrating May 1 as Labor Day.

Liberal politicians are still afraid of the word "class," fearful that someone might think they are not loyal sycophants of the capitalist system. The moment that the concept of "class" was dropped by business unions, their doom was sealed – and the ruling class knew it. Without class awareness, worker solidarity is quickly diluted. Racism, sexism, nationalism and scabbing suddenly become weapons in a life or death struggle in the labor market. If I throw six bones to ten hungry dogs, the results will be predictable – unless the dogs understand that together they can overpower the bone thrower. (Notice that the term "slave market" became "labor market" in 1865. Workers remain a market commodity.)

In my criticisms of business unions, I don't want to be misunderstood. Hundreds of thousands of union workers have suffered long strikes, hunger, lost their homes, been beaten, and many have died fighting the bosses. Many of the freedoms we still enjoy were won by these union struggles. I have fought beside them, belonged to many, and organized for them. I love the labor movement. But business unions have made some serious errors, in my opinion; fatal errors. So have we. We aren't in great shape either. Errors are not sins if we look at them honestly and try to correct them. In this spirit I offer this criticism, as a worker and as a brother.

Business unions differed sharply from the radical unions that existed prior to the 1920s, in that they were convinced that some U.S. workers could become a privileged class of workers in the world and gain "middle class" status by cooperating with U.S. capitalists. This "middle class" culture developed the predictable attitude that any worker outside their privileged position was a competitor. The Steel Workers recently protested at the FTAA conference in Miami, not in a spirit of solidarity with other workers, in my opinion, but in a hopeless attempt to defend those privileged jobs still remaining in the U.S. (The ending of tariffs on foreign steel recently may have been, in part, a pointed disciplinary message to U.S. steel workers.)

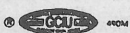
This cooperative strategy worked fairly well for those workers fortunate enough to be allowed into the privileged status for a half century. Corporate capitalism encouraged and cooperated with this illusion until the means and strength to enter the "new world order" was sprung on U.S. workers after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The "new world order" has proven that business union thinking about cooperation with U.S. capitalists was shortsighted and mistaken, but, even more important, that some workers profiting at the expense of, and with little regard for, other workers is not *union* behavior at all and needs to end now.

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Miami police riot as FTAA advances

BY NATHANIEL MILLER

IWW members from around the country joined thousands of protestors in Miami, Florida, in late November to oppose the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

During the protest the Miami Police, led by Chief John Timoney and backed by \$8.5 million in U.S. government funding (pulled from the \$87 billion Congress gave Bush for Iraq), used batons, tear gas, tasers, pepper spray, rubber, wooden, and plastic bullets and other weapons to attack unarmed protestors. Many protestors suffered injuries and 12 were hospitalized as a result of the police assault.

Milwaukee Wobbly Dan Danenberg was hit five times by police projectiles, another Milwaukee fellow worker was hit 12 times, including a baton blow to his injured shoulder, and the author of this article was shot near the crotch three times with police rubber bullets, which created large welts.

"A lot of revolutionaries were made that day," said Milwaukee Wob Skip Porter. "I am convinced that the cops were ready and willing to use lethal force."

Prior to the mass action there was a calculated campaign on the part of the police to intimidate and harass protestors. There were phalanxes of riot cops stationed on almost every street corner in downtown Miami, and periodically twenty to fifty police cars would cruise around the city at high speeds with their lights flashing. Military tanks were seen patrolling the city, and the protest's convergence center had a police helicopter hovering over it at all times, which used its spotlight to follow small groups of people leaving the center to go home. At one point we counted eight police helicopters hovering over one small action.

Small groups of protestors were subject to constant police harassment and even arrest. For example my group, comprised mostly of Philadelphia activists but also in-

cluding Brooklyn Wob Daniel Gross, was surrounded by nine riot police as we disembarked from the metro. We were bringing a box of granola to the convergence center. The police demanded to search the box. When FW Gross asked what the "probable cause" was, the cop yelled back that we should not try to "escalate the situation" as his cohorts fidgeted with their weapons. We even asked the cops if they were hungry and wanted any granola, which they ignored. The police did search the box, and, discovering it was really just granola, allowed us to continue.

But not all our encounters with the police were so benign. On the afternoon of the main day of the protest (Thursday, Nov. 20) the police attacked. The police waited until the permitted AFL-CIO march was over and most of the union members had filed out of the Miami Arena. Most of the protestors were resting or sleeping on grass inside and outside the arena. I was listening to the musicians playing on stage as I tried to fall asleep. Fittingly, one musician played "Joe Hill" as the police massed for their attack outside.

I left the arena to look for some friends. As I left I walked into a plume of teargas. I ran across the street and felt three rubber bullets slam into the area around my crotch. I doubled over and ran behind a sign as the police marched forward firing teargas and projectiles into the crowd. We were gradually pushed back down various side streets in Miami with the cops advancing steadily behind us firing at anyone they saw. The cops pushed the group deeper through downtown Miami as many of us built barricades in the streets to slow the police advance.

The cops eventually pushed us through Overtown, a predominantly black neighborhood, where local residents cheered as we went by. Some Overtown residents helped

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Human Rights Day actions demand right to organize

As part of International Human Rights Day Dec. 10, unions organized events across the United States to call attention to massive violations of workers' right to organize.

Thousands of union workers rallied at the Labor Department, marched on Wall Street and demonstrated in other cities. "We want the federal government to know that the right to organize is ours, and don't mess with it. It's that simple," said Jeff Butler, a member of Iron Workers Local 86 at a Seattle demonstration.

Just 13.2 percent of U.S. workers now belong to a union, the lowest rate since the government began collecting the data. Unions say a major cause of the decline has been a labor law system that allows employers to violate workers' rights with impunity.

"There are 45 million workers in our country who say they would join a union in an instant if they could, but they are prevented from doing that by employers and anti-worker elected leaders who have systematically stolen the freedom to organize from workers," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

"On this International Human Rights Day, thousands of workers are rallying across the United States because they cannot exercise a basic human right: the right to freedom of association," said Carol Pier, labor rights and trade researcher for Human Rights Watch.

Three years ago the human rights group

released a report (available online at www.hrw.org/reports/2000/uslabor/) documenting systematic abuse of workers' right to organize and bargain collectively. Now the rights group is calling on Congress to reform labor laws to protect workers' rights.

"It's high time the United States showed the world that its professed support for workers' human rights is not empty rhetoric but official policy," said Pier.

AFL-CIO Organizing Director Stewart Acuff said the process of gaining union recognition through the National Labor Relations Board "is such a terrible experience for workers. It opens them up to having their rights violated," and can take years because employers are adept at intimidating workers and stalling the process. The federation estimates that 20,000 workers are fired or penalized each year for union activities.

The AFL-CIO is pushing for legislation to certify a union after a majority of workers sign authorization cards. It also would increase penalties for employers that intimidate or fire workers for union activity. But the bills stand no chance of passage in the Republican-controlled Congress.

Current law provides few penalties to stop employers from firing workers involved in union activities. If an employer is found guilty,

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Grocery strike

When I joined pickets at my local Ralphs where workers were locked out, I noticed something that struck me as a little peculiar. Ordinarily, management banishes such unwelcome individuals carrying union signs from its premises. But in this case pickets were freely strolling in front of the store. They were parking cars on the company parking lot. And they were allowed bathroom privileges inside the store. Didn't management even care?

Pickets told me the manager was handling trade, but were uninformed about hired scabs as had taken place at other stores. This ignorance came as no surprise. Rank-and-file workers are so often ill-informed.

Picketing at the rear was abandoned early on after police were called to back up uncooperative Teamsters. "We're a peaceful union and don't want trouble," explained the picket captain.

Customer support here in Lawndale, California, was good. Pickets pointed out that the parking lot was only a third as full as usual. Food-4-Less, a competing store, was reporting robust sales.

All was going well, right? Yet on Oct. 31 the UFCW pulled its pickets from Ralphs and Albertsons to concentrate its forces on Vons. No pickets at two major stores means a conclusion of the strike there? Literal-minded folks will say so. Now, surely, they can shop there without the least twinge of conscience.

Except if they are Wobblies!

Dorice McDaniels, X333140

Remembering FW Peter Suto

Reader's Digest used to have a regular feature, "The Most Unforgettable Character I Ever Met." (Maybe they still do, I only read the *Digest* in waiting rooms if nothing else is available.) This is my entry.

It was on an early August night in 1970 that I met Fellow Worker Peter Suto. We were two weeks into a wildcat coal strike. It was organized (if that's the word) by a group called "The Disabled Miners and Widows of Southern W. Va." and moved into the northern panhandle. The plan to close all the mines in West Virginia before the annual vacation had been

largely accomplished, and roving pickets had now moved into western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio.

There were all sorts of federal court orders out and my brother (who had just returned from Vietnam and was working at Consolidated Coal's big McElroy mine south of Moundsville) and I also had criminal misdemeanor warrants out for forcing the closure of Consol's Shoemaker mine.

I was in hiding to avoid service of the federal orders and the state warrant, and had come back that night to pick up my mail. I lived in a basement flat in east Wheeling, a racially mixed low-rent district.

As I came back up the steps, a short stocky man in his early 70s with a shock of white hair and thick glasses blocked my way. "Hey, fellow worker," he said. "I want to give you something to read." I thought I had been nailed, but he handed me an *Industrial Worker*.

I felt like I had fallen through some trap door. Here I was, up to my neck in a "good" strike, and I was confronted by an emissary from Big Bill Haywood.

After things settled down, I looked up FW Suto (he insisted that we use the title) and we spent a good deal of time together. He had two other Wobblies in his group, both of whom were about his age. They were all vague about how they ended up in Wheeling.

FW Suto was always pressing me to organize, but he had no real idea as to how hardcore the lumpen was in the upper Ohio Valley. A friend of mine was a foreman at Banner Fiberboard in Wellsburg. I prevailed upon him to let FW Suto address the workers at a shift meeting.

FW Suto, his two cronies, and I drove north for the 7 a.m. meeting. He gave a long impassioned speech which would have impelled any sentient being to join together with like souls against the bosses. Out of the 30 men there, a half-dozen actually took cards.

Coming back, FW Suto got in the back of my old VW. "Watch it. It's a little tight back there," I said.

"I been in tight spots before," he laughed, and went on to tell how he had been rounded up with the usual suspects during the Palmer Raids in Chicago. He had been very careful during his interrogation to stay away from the

window, since that's how the old regime in Hungary had disposed of its adversaries. I think he was a little contemptuous of the FBI because it *didn't* practice defenestration.

One of FW Suto's cadres died and he prevailed upon me to visit the funeral home with

him. There were only two other people there, the hard-faced sisters of the deceased. They knew nothing of his Wobbly background, but FW Suto

went on at length about what a great member the deceased had been.

"So what do you want?" the younger sister, a woman in her 60s, asked.

FW Suto said that it was traditional that a eulogy be delivered, outlining the deceased's contribution to the labor movement.

"So who's going to deliver this speech?" she asked warily.

"Him," Suto said, nodding toward me.

It was all I could do to keep from bolting the room. I have the general revulsion of a Jewish *kohane* about being around the dead. Eulogizing a man I barely knew in front of his hard-faced sisters was more than I was prepared to do for the revolution.

The sister looked at me for a long time, shrugged, and said, "OK, but keep it short. We're paying for this, remember."

On the way out, I tried to explain to FW Suto that I couldn't do this.

"I'll write it out for you, you just read it. The funeral's at 2 p.m. Pick me up at noon. We better be early, I think they might try to double-cross us."

I didn't show up. I couldn't. And I certainly wasn't going back to visit. I knew he had a low opinion of me. In one of his reports, he praised a couple guys I introduced him to, but called me an "adventure." Under certain circumstances being an "adventure" could merit a slug in the back of the head.

Still, I missed the old guy. There was not a scintilla of self-doubt in him, and he sailed by something more clear than the North Star. Once, when I asked him how he could be sure of all that he believed, he said, "I get it from the *Wheeling News-Register*. That's all I read, that and the *Industrial Worker*."

Only a few years later I saw his name on the obituary page of the *News-Register*. I think

he was a retired railroader. I was living 50 miles away from Wheeling then, and I thought about volunteering to do his eulogy. But I didn't. I couldn't look him in the eye, even if it was closed.

This will have to do. Rest in peace, fellow worker. Rest in peace.

H.J. Rogers, New Martinsville WV

In November, We Remember

In the November 2003 *Industrial Worker*, you mention the judicial murders and thug murders of famous and unknown workers whose deaths in November are among the reasons that "In November We Remember."

I would like to remember one more. On Nov. 21, 1936, Spanish Loyalist general and anarcho-syndicalist leader Buenaventura Durruti was murdered. There were about a million people at his funeral procession. Speeches praising Durruti were delivered by Catalan President Luis Companys and by the Soviet Russian Consul General, Vladimir Antonoff-Ovseenko. Both men marched in the five-hour funeral procession.

Durruti was a revolutionary activist who could nevertheless transcend political differences. He was a great military leader who inspired self-discipline in his supporters.

Raymond Solomon, Rego Park NY

Keep up the good work

I have been receiving the *IW* for a number of months now. The new masthead and layout in general is much more attractive and modern than what I remember from the past. Visually, it is very easy to read and this is very important in any newspaper.

I also find the newspaper is very well-written from a number of different perspectives: actual coverage of workers' struggles, economic analysis of the condition of workers in the U.S., good international coverage and good cultural sections. I definitely do not find it is written "too high" for the average worker, as someone said recently.

Thirdly, I understand the difficulty in getting articles in Spanish, but I agree with those who feel that having a Spanish-language page or section will be vital in the expansion of both the paper and the *IWW*. One possibility might be to reprint articles from CNT or other Spanish-language syndicalist papers.

David Miller, Roy Brook NY

Industrial Worker

The Voice of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism

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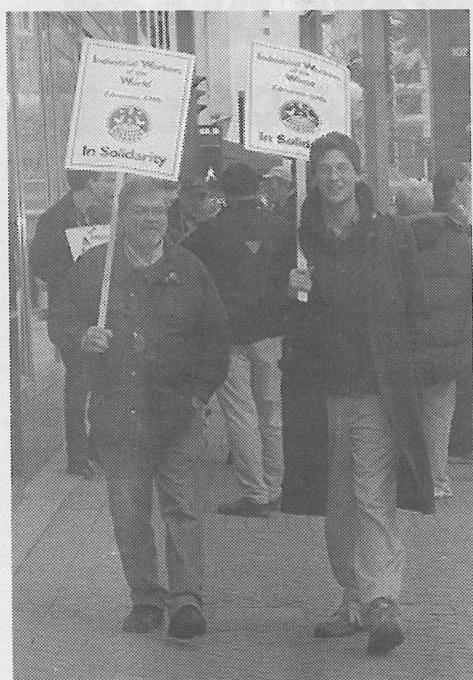
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Edmonton Wobs walk A-Channel picket line

Pictured left are two members of the Edmonton GMB, picketing in solidarity with A-Channel television staff who have been on strike since Sept. 17, seeking a first contract. Full-time workers at Edmonton's #3 station earn as little as CAN \$19,000 a year; the company is refusing to agree to wage standards, instead insisting on individual contracts.

Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Local 1900 is targeting advertisers in Edmonton and in other cities where the firm operates to cut off the flow of ad revenue into A-Channel coffers. Supporters have been picketing advertisers in Edmonton and Toronto, and the union's web site features a Nov. 20 letter from the syndicalist Swedish Workers Center (SAC) pledging to press furniture maker IKEA to cancel its advertising.

RedcellX software workers continue fight to collect unpaid wages

BY RICHARD SEYMOUR

Communications, Telecommunications and Computer Workers Industrial Union 560 (IWW) members in Portland, Oregon, are driving a campaign to force RedcellX, an embedded software firm to make good on its promise to pay several workers who received bad checks or were otherwise not paid for work done.

The campaign began Sept. 30 and Oct. 1 with two visits to the office (at that time in downtown Portland) to demand payment for fellow workers Jasper Greves and Kevin Turner. Nearly two dozen Wobblies from a variety of workplaces participated. The end result was that the owner and CEO of the company, Troy Melquist, agreed to sign a payment plan for each of the two workers.

However, instead of honoring the agreement Melquist moved the office to an undisclosed location in the suburb of Hillsboro and defaulted on the payment plans.

IU 560 members successfully located the company and have connected with 18 other workers – nearly every worker employed, mostly on a contract basis, over a four-month period – who have likely been cheated out of wages. Four of these have filed official claims with Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) and one more has filed a small claims case in civil court. Now that Melquist and RedcellX have defaulted on their payment

plans, Turner and Greves will also be filing against the company and/or Melquist himself.

In one incident, Greves and I arrived at the office of RedcellX (still in downtown Portland at the time) to sign a receipt for partial payment to Greves. Even though Melquist had asked Greves to come by that afternoon, the office was locked up, and the sole occupant – a newly hired project manager – called the police. Since then, that same project manager has been cheated out of wages and has filed a claim against RedcellX with BOLI.

Another worker has begun a campaign to encourage Oregon's Attorney General to investigate the matter.

At this point, most workers do not expect to receive payment, but are determined to see the company shut down to ensure that future workers are not similarly cheated. Portland IU 560 members, however, are continuing to pursue all leads that might see all workers repaid.

Preamble to the IWW Constitution

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

IWW Ottawa-Outaouais sings for ten more years of organizing

BY PETER MOORE

The Industrial Workers of the World Ottawa-Outaouais branch celebrated its 10th anniversary with singing and poetry Nov. 30 at Rasputin's Folk Cafe on 696 Bronson Avenue.

Peter Timusk and Jennifer Arbour opened the evening with song and poetry, the latter which will be published in a book edited by Branch founding member and former *Industrial Worker* editor Carlos Murray.

Mathieu Brulé, recently elected local General Defence Committee secretary, spoke about what the month of November means to labour activists and the IWW, in particular. He recalled the legacy of labour agitator and founding member of the IWW, Mother Jones, and more recently the fourth year anniversary of the Seattle protests that helped stop the World Trade Organization meeting in that city. The General Defence Committee is a place for IWWs and non-IWWs to work together and raise funds and organize the

defence of activists.

Non-IWWs also came to share songs and stories. Guatemalan folk singer and refugee Tito Medina had the audience clapping and reminded them of the struggle his people have faced with stories of sadness and courage in the underground during Guatemala's civil war and his passionate playing.

Another local activist and singer, Bob Carty, came to play for the first time his new song about the Rideau Canal workers, mostly immigrants looking for a better life, who died of disease, malnutrition and blasting to build an engineering marvel of North America.

Former IWW Mark Richardson recited a five-minute poem that challenged the grammar of the English language.

John Hollingsworth and Canadian Union of Public Employees' activist Alia ended the evening with some Celtic tunes and a rousing song about the coal miners who still work one of the most dangerous jobs on the planet.

"Co-Op" miners need solidarity

The IWW General Executive Board urges members and branches to contribute relief funds to 74 coal miners locked out from C.W. Mining's Bear Canyon Mine (known as the Co-Op Mine) in Huntington, Utah.

Salt Lake City Wobs have been walking picket lines with the miners – fired Sept. 22 after a short job action in solidarity with United Mine Workers Association supporter William Estrada, who was suspended for refusing to sign a disciplinary warning.

Co-Op miners, mostly Mexican, earned between \$5.25 and \$7.00/hr, with no health benefits, working with unsafe equipment. Injured workers were required to stay on the job so the company could avoid reporting injuries. Miner Jesus Salazar said that unless the safety issues in the mine are addressed, "something terrible will happen there."

There is only one UMWA mine still op-

erating in the once 100 percent unionized district. (The Co-Op mine does have a company union, controlled by the owner's family and mine supervisors.) The UMWA is seeking a ruling from the NLRB to return the miners to their jobs with back pay. But the Labor Board is notoriously slow, and reluctant to enforce workers' rights.

Workers are trying to survive on \$100 a month strike relief, and face utility cut-offs in the dead of winter. Donations to the miners' struggle can be sent to: UMWA 525 S. 1st St., Price UT 84501. They should be earmarked for the "Co-Op Miners Relief Fund."

Just Coffee goes IWW

Workers at Madison's Just Coffee, a coffee roaster which supplies shops throughout the region, have joined the IWW and are being issued a shop card.

Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially – that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers' ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses' orders so literally that nothing gets done. Sometimes it means agitating around particular issues or grievances in a specific workplace, or across an industry.

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

TO JOIN: Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month's dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 13476, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$1,000, dues are \$6 a month. If your monthly income is between \$1,000 - \$2,000, dues are \$12 a month. If your monthly income is over \$2,000 a month, dues are \$18 a month.

- ☐ I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer
- ☐ I agree to abide by the IWW constitution
- ☐ I will study its principles and make myself acquainted with its purposes.



Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Occupation: _____
Phone: _____ E-mail: _____
Amount Enclosed: _____
Membership includes a subscription to the *Industrial Worker*.

Boycott Borders

Borders returned to the bargaining table Dec. 1 for the first time since the strike at its Ann Arbor store began November 8, and for the first time expressed willingness to discuss union proposals. However, Borders still offered no concrete proposal and would not agree to return to the table until mid-December. Management is clearly trying to forestall solidarity actions until the busy Christmas retail season is over.

Meanwhile, workers in Minneapolis have agreed to accept Borders' final offer – essentially the company's current pay scale and employee handbook – if the company will agree to neutrality as the UFCW resumes its attempts to organize other Borders stores.

Borders Readers United continues to call on supporters to boycott Borders, Waldenbooks and Amazon.com (which has a partnership with Borders). A boycott pledge is online at: <http://BordersReadersUnited.a2wc.org>. Downloadable fliers are also available on the site, for those interested in leafleting a Borders outlet near them.

Farewell, Fellow Worker

Youngstown Workers' Solidarity Club co-founder Bob Schindler died Oct. 20 at age 70. An electrical worker and labor and peace activist, Bob touched all who knew him.

Correction

Hanna Siitonen died in 1977, not 1997. (November, p. 6) We regret the error.



This month it's a *Reader's Digest* condensed reading version of Praise Boss. You don't have to read anything else this month because ol' Frank Brill will set you straight on everything you needed to understand in this complex world of ours. Well, at least it's complex for me...

★ ★ ★

The light bulb jokes continue: Robert Zani says: "It takes no Wobs to screw in a light bulb. If the bulb was made by a nonunion worker it screws itself."

★ ★ ★

I heard an interview on the radio where it was said the Australian parliament has set limits on the use of curse words while speaking on the floor: you are allowed to curse, but are limited in the number of times. However, the word "please" has been banned from usage because it is too subservient. Now here is one case where workers can learn from politicians. In our dealings with the boss class we should use limited curses and never use the subservient "please"...

★ ★ ★

Five cannibals get appointed as engineers in a aerospace defense company. During the welcoming ceremony the boss says, "You're all part of our team now. You can earn good money here, and you can go to the cafeteria for something to eat. So please don't trouble any of the other employees."

The cannibals promised.

Four weeks later the boss returns and says, "You're all working very hard, and I'm very satis?ed with all of you. However, one of our janitors has disappeared. Do any of you know what happened to him?"

The cannibals all shake their heads no.

After the boss has left, the leader of the cannibals says to the others, "Which of you idiots ate the janitor?"

A hand raises hesitantly, to which the leader of the cannibals replies, "You fool! For four weeks we've been eating Team Leaders, Supervisors and Project Managers and no one noticed anything, and you have to go and eat the janitor!"

★ ★ ★

It's been revealed that the world's major economic powers have been building a powerful weapon of mass destruction that destroys people but leaves buildings. It's called capitalism, folks.

★ ★ ★

It's again time for F.N. Brill's anagramorama

"Fourty Hour Work Week" = both "Eek! Why Workout Furor?" and "Thou Woke Worker Fury."

As please note that "One Big Union" = "Booing Ennui." But "American Federation of Labor" = "Moderation Afiance Laborer" or "Affordable Reaction Moraine"; afiance is defined as betrothed, moraine as a slippery slope.

★ ★ ★

Here is the most accurate critique of capitalist economics I have yet read: Experienced economist and not-so-experienced economist are walking down the road. They walk across some dog crap lying on the sidewalk. Experienced economist says: "If you eat it I'll give you \$20,000!" Not-so-experienced economist runs his optimization problem and figures out he's better off eating the crap, so he does and collects money.

Continuing along the same road they almost step into yet another pile of crap. Not so experienced economist says to his mentor: "Now, if you eat this crap I'll give you \$20,000." After evaluating the proposal, experienced economist eats the crap and collects the money. They go on.

The not-so-experienced economist starts thinking and says: "What have we done? We both have the same amount of money we had before, but we both ate crap! I don't see us being better off." Experienced economist: "Well, that's true, but you overlooked the fact that we've just been involved in \$40,000 of trade."

★ ★ ★

I posted the above economist joke on a web list I'm on and got the following reply:

"There's a real-life parallel to the joke about the two economists who ate dog-do – Two years ago a friend of my brother-in-law bragged that his company (Qwest) had "sold" \$10 million of Internet products to Accenture (formerly Andersen Consulting as in Arthur Andersen), who sold \$10 million of consulting to Qwest. No money exchanged hands but each claimed \$10 million of revenue."

★ ★ ★

Colin from Vancouver sends in the following quote from Bertrand Russell: "I want to say, in all seriousness, that a great deal of harm is being done in the modern world by belief in the virtuousness of work, and that the road to happiness and prosperity lies in an organized diminution of work."

Always the friend of the working masses through organizing the diminution of his work, F.N. Brill can be reached c/o IWW, 616 E. Burnside, Portland OR 97214 U.S.A. or e-mail fnbrill@yahoo.com

Calif. Latino workers in protest strike

Stores along Latino shopping corridors in California cities were closed Dec. 12 as thousands of demonstrators protested California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's repeal of a law allowing undocumented workers to obtain driver's licenses.

In a statewide protest, Latino students skipped school, workers struck, and many refused to spend money in an effort to demonstrate how central they are to the state's economy. Many immigrant workers are unable to secure licenses, essential not only for many jobs but also to get to work in a state where few cities have effective mass transit.

As a result they are often forced to drive without licenses, risking arrest and deportation.

The strike was called by the Mexican American Political Association. Some employers gave workers the day off, while others threatened to fire any one who did not report for work.

Others found that workers gave them no choice in the matter. Jose Velazquez, owner of Armadillo's restaurant in St. Helena, said. "All the workers told me they wanted to take the day. So unfortunately for me, I have to spoil them. They're my team and they're my power, and without them I can do nothing."

Canadian workers brace for neoliberal attack

BY X348328, OTTAWA

Santa for Canada's bosses is coming early this year and he has plenty of coal for the working class. On Dec. 12, Paul Martin Junior became Canada's twenty-first prime minister. Journalist Murray Dobbin, author of *Paul Martin: CEO For Canada?*, is not happy.

"He will be one of the most dangerous prime ministers Canada has ever had," Dobbin told a packed ampitheatre at the Ottawa Public Library Nov. 28.

Dobbin, a journalist and biographer of conservative politicians, former Opposition leader Preston Manning and former Prime Minister Kim Campbell, is also a research associate of the liberal Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. His most recent book was *The Myth of the Good Corporate Citizen*.

Paul Martin is far from a good corporate citizen. Martin is the owner of Canada Steamship Lines which he bought in 1981, a company that moved into international shipping and chose to run flags of convenience ships. Flags of convenience crews are paid a quarter or less of a union Canadian crew's wages and tend to have less training and experience, including in safety. "You simply can't call a company that uses flags of convenience responsible," said Dobbin.

In 2002, Canada Steamship Lines tried to disembark an Australian union crew from the cement-hauler Yarra and convert it into a flag of convenience ship with a Ukrainian crew. The union members refused and occupied the ship for 14 days. The Australian labour board ruled that the company could re-flag the ship, but only if it paid the Ukrainian crew Australian wages while it worked the Australian coastline.

As finance minister from 1993 to 2002, Martin had put his company into a "blind trust" for his company, a legal arrangement to ensure Martin has no direct say over his company nor can use his position as Canada's finance minister to his company's advantage. Criticism of his blind trust grew so intense that Martin finally placed the company into the hands of his sons.

Dobbin criticized Martin for destroying social security and labour standards over the last ten years, which "have driven working people's bargaining power into the basement." Among the financial reforms brought in by Martin is the removal of universal access to the country's unemployment insurance program, now accessible only to 45% of the people who pay into it. "Terrified workers are not having families anymore," said Dobbin.

Martin's allegiance is to Corporate Canada, not working people. Dobbin said that Martin fundraised \$12 million to run for the Liberal leadership from Canada's equivalent of Wall Street, Toronto's Bay Street financial district. "Here is a guy who is in debt to Bay Street. If he does something progressive, they're all going to call him," said Dobbin.

In his acceptance speech at the Liberal Party convention in Toronto, Martin touted vague ideas such as a "politics of achievement" which would "summon a new national will." Like the typical politician, he promised everyone everything, resulting in contradictory visions. "I believe in the freedom of the individual. I believe that freedom is best assured when we recognize our collective responsibility to one another," said Martin.

While committing to top quality education system, improved care for the disadvantaged, and universal high quality health care, Martin also committed to "balanced budgets, a continually dropping debt ratio, lower taxes." On this same platform, Martin became in the mid-Nineties the Finance Minister to fire the most public service workers – 50,000 – in Canadian history.

Currently, Paul Martin is purging the Liberal cabinet of ministers who served his predecessor and bitter rival, Jean Chretien. Martin became prime minister without an elec-

tion mandate, replacing the retiring Chretien who he practically forced from power by taking over party riding associations. Martin won the party leadership race with 95 percent of the vote. The Liberals are expected to easily win the next federal election.

Right after his appointment, Martin met with 500 top bureaucrats to soothe their fears and recruit their support to "transform" government. Martin is floating ideas such as eliminating the human resources department, support for the U.S.' improbable missile defence system, and creation of a Canadian version of the Homeland Security super-ministry.

"Paul Martin and the people who pull his strings are trying to open up health care to privatization," said Dobbin.

This rapid shift to the right led Prime Minister Chretien to caution Martin to remember he was a Liberal.

Martin's agenda, according to Dobbin, will be to further reduce social programs, open the door to privatizing the health and education sectors, and effect what a business think-tank calls "deep integration" with the U.S.

"His first 100 days will be spent cutting," said Dobbin. He urged people to begin to mobilize against Martin now or never.

Quebec general strike?

More than a million workers joined strikes and demonstrations across Quebec Dec. 11 to protest planned changes to the province's labour code.

"We'll hit them where it hurts," said Henri Massé, head of the Quebec Federation of Labour, unless the Liberal government backs down. 125 unions have already voted for a general strike in February, he noted. "We're not threatening, we're promising."

The day of protest disrupted Montreal mass transit, while in other cities transit workers traded in their uniforms for black clothing and union buttons. Several highways across the province were blockaded, and day care centers closed for the day to protest an increase in charges to parents.

Claudette Carbonneau, president of the Confederation of National Trade Unions, said the premier's antisocial policies have enraged "everyone in Quebec.... We are sending a message to the government that we will not tolerate such enormous change in our society without a proper debate."

The government has vowed to push its proposals – which would hit public sector unions particularly hard – through before Christmas.

The bills would make it easier to subcontract operations, raise the cost of daycare services, and reorganize public sector bargaining units.

Canadian postal workers sue to overturn NAFTA

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers has turned to the Superior Court of Ontario, seeking a ruling that NAFTA rules allowing foreign corporations to sue governments over public policies, laws and programs violate Canada's constitution. CUPW is also fighting for standing in an action brought by United Parcel Service seeking US\$160 million in damages because Canada's publicly funded post office competes with it in the package delivery and courier markets.

B.C. Ferry strike to arbitration

A strike by the 4,300-member British Columbia Ferry and Marine Workers' Union ended Dec. 12, when the government sent the dispute with the recently privatized B.C. Ferry Services to binding arbitration. B.C. Ferry is the main transport link between Vancouver Island and the B.C. mainland.

Workers had defied back-to-work legislation, and union officials faced the prospect of possible imprisonment and crippling fines if the strike continued.

Iraqi unionists arrested

BY DAVID BACON

BAGHDAD — U.S. occupation forces in Iraq have escalated their efforts to paralyze Iraq's new labor unions with a series of arrests. A convoy of ten humvees and personnel carriers descended Dec. 6 on the old headquarters building of the Transport and Communications Workers union, which has been used since June as the office of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions. Twenty soldiers stormed into the building, handcuffed eight members of the Federation's executive board, and took them into detention.

"They gave no reason at all," says IFTU spokesperson Abdullah Muhsin. Soldiers painted out the name of the federation on the front of the building with black paint. Because the new Iraqi unions lack basic resources like office furniture and machines, there was little to confiscate in the building. "But we did have a few files, and they took those," Muhsin adds.

Although the eight were released the following day, there was no explanation from the Coalition Provisional Authority for the detentions. The raid followed the day-long detention of two other union leaders on Nov. 23 — Qasim Hadi, general secretary of the Union of the Unemployed, and Adil Salih, another leader of the organization. Hadi has been arrested twice before by occupation troops for leading demonstrations of unemployed workers demanding unemployment benefits and jobs.

Both union groups have been organizing Iraqi workers for months. The Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions held a convention in Baghdad last June, at which it established unions in 12 industries. The Unemployed Union belongs to the Workers Unions and Councils group, which has also been organizing since last summer.

The wave of union organizing going on in Iraq is a product of the desperate conditions of the country's workers. As many as seven million people, or 70 percent of the work force, have no jobs, go hungry and are

even homeless. Although Congress appropriated \$87 billion for reconstruction, Dr. Nuri Jafer, Iraq's deputy minister of Labor and Social Affairs, admits he can find "no country willing to fund our plans" for a minimal system of unemployment benefits.

Reconstruction is invisible in Baghdad. Work may be proceeding on pipelines and ports for oil exports, but huge piles of war rubble lie untouched in city streets.

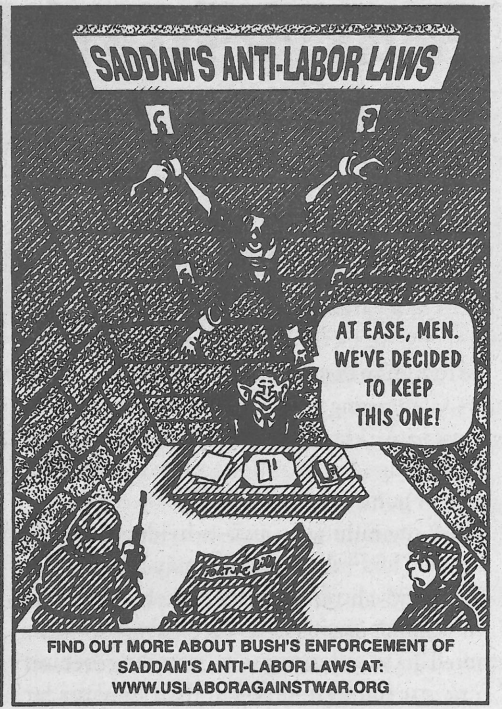
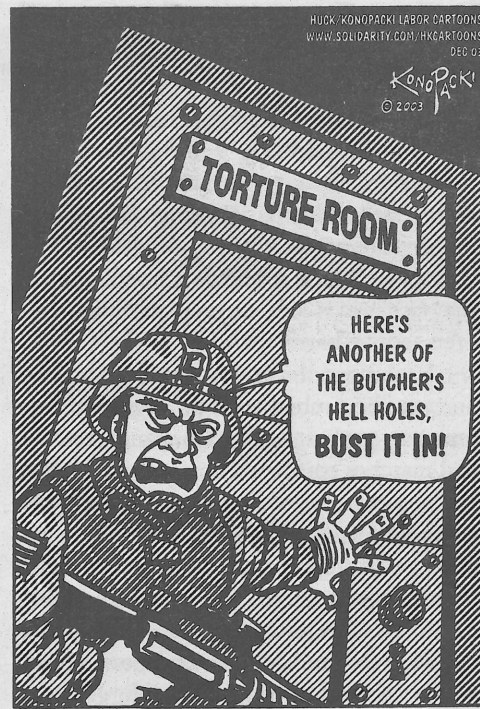
U.S. funding pays for an overwhelming military presence and the transformation of the Iraqi economy.

Both are intended to make the country attractive to foreign investors. In an Oct. 8 phone press conference, Thomas Foley, director for private sector development for the Coalition Provisional Authority, announced a list of the first Iraqi state enterprises to be sold off, including cement and fertilizer plants, phosphate and sulfur mines, pharmaceutical factories and the country's airline.

Iraqi workers view the prospect of the privatization of their workplaces with dread, fearing the sell-off will bring massive layoffs. The manager of the Al Daura oil refinery, Dathar Al-Kashab, predicted that with privatization "I'll have to fire 1500 workers. In America when a company lays people off, there's unemployment insurance, and they won't die from hunger. If I dismiss employees now, I'm killing them and their families."

At the refinery, as in most factories, those with jobs work 11 and 13 hour shifts for a salary of \$60 a month. They have no safety shoes, goggles, masks or other protective gear. The Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions helped the refinery's workers organize a union and elect its leaders, and have done the same in other industries.

In Basra workers have formed a central labor council, and have mounted protest demonstrations. The Workers Unions and Councils group has helped workers elect committees in the State Leather Industry plant, the largest shoe factory in the Middle East, and



the Mamoun Vegetable Oil enterprise, among others. Whenever these new unions try to talk with plant managers, however, they're told that a law decreed by Saddam Hussein in 1987 forbids workers in state-owned enterprises (where the majority of Iraqis work) from forming unions. The CPA is still enforcing this law. Another order issued by the CPA on June 6 threatens that anyone who "incites civil disorder" will be detained as a prisoner of war.

The recent arrests are the latest incidents in this effort by the occupation authorities to suppress unions. The anti-union campaign lays bare the economic purpose of the occupation — the privatization of the enterprises that employ most workers. International conferences take place in Washington and London every week, at which these assets are put on sale. At one recent conference, ExxonMobil, Delta Airlines and the American Hospital Group all expressed interest.

Since new foreign owners can be expected to cut labor costs by laying off workers, resistance at the work site has been made illegal by laws banning unions and by the arrest of their leaders. In an additional step to make

investment attractive, the CPA is holding down the wages of Iraqi workers. The \$60 a month received by most employees is the same salary paid under Saddam Hussein, but the bonuses, profit-sharing payments and subsidies for food and housing were ended when the occupation began, resulting in a drastic cut in income.

"The coalition forces control the finances, and our wages," says Detrala Beshab, president of Al Daura's new union.

Iraq's new labor movement is determined to stop the sell off of work sites, the loss of jobs, and the prohibition of unions and strikes. Jassim Mashkoul, the IFTU's director for internal communications, laments that "at the beginning, we thought our situation might get better, since we got rid of Saddam Hussein. But it hasn't improved."

According to another federation leader, Muhsen Mull Ali, who spent two long stints in prison for organizing unions, "our responsibility is to oppose privatization as much as possible, and fight for the welfare of our workers." But to the Bush administration and the occupation authority, this activity is a crime.

Bleak prospects for unemployed

As the number of U.S. workers filing for unemployment benefits continues to rise, the federal program that provided an extra 13 weeks of benefits to people who used up their 26 weeks of state benefits was set to expire at the end of December. Meanwhile, many state insurance funds have run dry, leading some states to cut back benefit levels.

While the government continues to claim the economy is rebounding, the "recovery" is thus far limited to corporate profits and worker productivity. Because employers are making existing workers work longer (overtime is up) and harder, bosses have been able to avoid new hiring even in the retail sector which is in its busiest season of the year. Manufacturing employment continues to fall, and many of the new jobs on offer are temporary positions with low wages, no benefits, and no job security.

"There is no question that managers are trying to squeeze every ounce they can from their existing employees before they give in to hiring," said Nariman Bahravesh, chief economist at Global Insight.

While the unemployment rate has finally stopped rising, this is the result not of the trickle of new jobs — just 57,000 in November, far less than the number of people entering the labor market that month — but rather of hundreds of thousands of workers who have simply given up looking for work and so no longer are counted in the statistics.

Less than a third of the jobs lost in the last recession have been replaced, and most of the new jobs pay much lower wages than the jobs they replaced. More than 2 million workers (nearly a fourth of all unemployed workers) have been jobless for more than 25 weeks — the highest rate of long-term unemployment in 20 years.



The difference a decade makes

BY ERIC LEE

I have been thinking about the changes that have taken place in the world in the last decade or so, and in particular the effect of the Internet. And I've been thinking about Iraq. Let me explain.

Yesterday I was supposed to have a meeting to discuss a website. But instead, I found myself displaying the enormous power of the Internet as a campaigning tool for trade unions.

My meeting was with the London representative of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions, Abdullah Muhsin, at the headquarters of the RMT union, which represents, among others, the people who work on the London Underground. Abdullah had recently returned from Baghdad and we were due to discuss the creation of the union's first website, which will be located at <http://www.iraqitradeunions.org>. But we didn't get to that — instead, we had to deal with a crisis.

Abdullah had just received a phone call from the brothers in Baghdad telling him that three days earlier, U.S. occupying forces had driven up to the union's temporary headquarters in ten armored vehicles. Dozens of troops participated in the raid. Eight IFTU officials were arrested. Windows were smashed. The sign with the union's name on it was defaced. Banners and posters condemning terrorism were torn down. (Obviously the American soldiers couldn't read Arabic.) No explanation was given.

A day later, the eight arrested men were released. ("Released unharmed," Abdullah stresses.) But the union's efforts to get the news to the outside world were blocked — they were unable to use their computers, and couldn't get a phone line out of the country until two days after the release. The raid had taken place three days ago.

Nevertheless, it was urgent that we bring this story to the attention of the international labour movement. And to demand of the US government that, at the very least, they investigate what happened — and guarantee that it will not happen again.

While Alex Gordon of the RMT got on the phone to journalists and members of Parliament, Abdullah and I sat down at the computer to see what we could do.

We had a draft IFTU statement in hand which had been dictated to Abdullah by phone, and which he had translated into English. We published this immediately to the web using LabourStart's Labour News Network, a feature of the LabourStart site that allows anyone to post news stories. (This was something we had created in order to allow strikers, for example, to get their own side of the story up on the net.)

We then added a link to that story to LabourStart's main database, and afterwards, we made it the top story of the day. This meant that it would not only appear on top of our home page, but also on the nearly 520 trade union websites that use our service — including six IWW websites in the USA, Canada, Australia and the UK.

We digested the news story into a single paragraph and also drew up a one-paragraph message to President Bush demanding that the U.S. investigate the raid and guarantee that it would not recur. We put these into LabourStart's ActNOW online campaigning system and the campaign went live on the net. Unionists were now only a click away from sending on their messages to Bush.

The final stage was the mass mailing. Merely putting up the information, or allowing a simple one-click online protest, would not produce results. Email is the most powerful weapon we have in the online arsenal and we used it at once. We drafted a short email message to be sent to the 16,200 people on LabourStart's mailing list pointing them to the page on the web where they could read more — and make their feelings known to the White House.

In essence, then, the process consists of three parts: getting the information onto the web, creating a simple online facility to allow people to act, and then spreading the word using email.

While we were handling the online part of the campaign — and the whole process took less than an hour — Alex had managed to get a friendly member of Parliament to agree to raise the question in the House of Commons the following day. (Even though British troops were not involved in the incident, the UK is the senior partner in the U.S.-led coalition.) Contacts were made with journalists. Unions (such as the powerful Congress of South African Trade Unions) began issuing statements of protest and solidarity.

An hour after I had come into the RMT offices with the intention of discussing a website with Abdullah, we had managed to demonstrate the enormous potential of the net. There was nothing that could compare with the speed or the reach of email and the web.

Now imagine if all this had happened in 1991, during the first war between the U.S. and Iraq. Imagine if Saddam had been deposed then, and a new independent union movement had been formed. What would have happened if US forces back then had raided their offices and arrested their leaders? How would we have known? How would we have spread the word?

The differences between then and now are vast — thanks to this fantastic new technology.

Fear & loathing in Miami

BY JOHN GORMAN

As the shouting in the street is replaced by pleadings in the courtrooms, it is safe to say that the City of Miami will be paying some substantial judgments and making more than a few expensive settlements in the months and years of legal proceedings that will follow the police state tactics used to quell the dissent surrounding the Free Trade Area of the Americas Conference held here in November.

The ACLU and AFL-CIO are already rolling out their legal cannons and will undoubtedly be joined in their barrage by other outraged organizations and individuals. While Police Chief John Timoney may be the city's "man of the hour" now, he is likely to become the regime's scapegoat as the legal battles wear on and the officials now "standing behind him" are found huddled in their bunkers far to the rear.

One culprit will, however, probably escape any reproach, let alone punishment, for these outrages: the media, both corporate and "alternative." Across the continent, from Toronto to Tampa, newspapers assured the public that "20,000 demonstrators," as the *Boston Globe* put it, were "determined to disrupt negotiations on trade among 34 countries." The thought that the vast majority of those demonstrators had nothing more in mind than the exercise of their Constitutionally protected right to speak their minds and "petition for the redress of grievances" never occurred to these pundits.

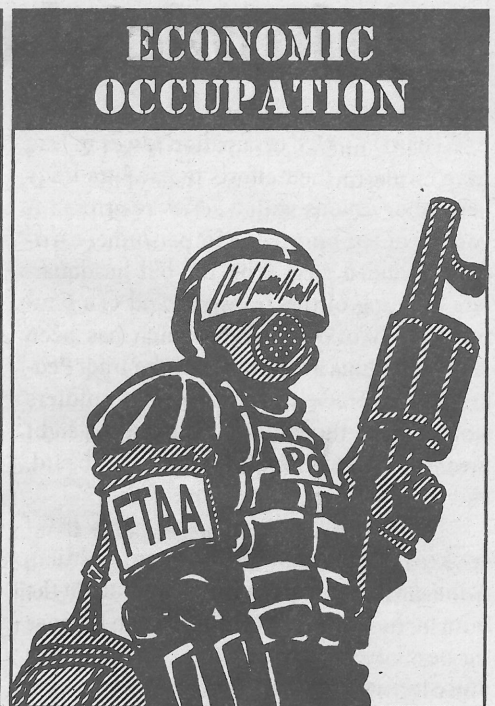
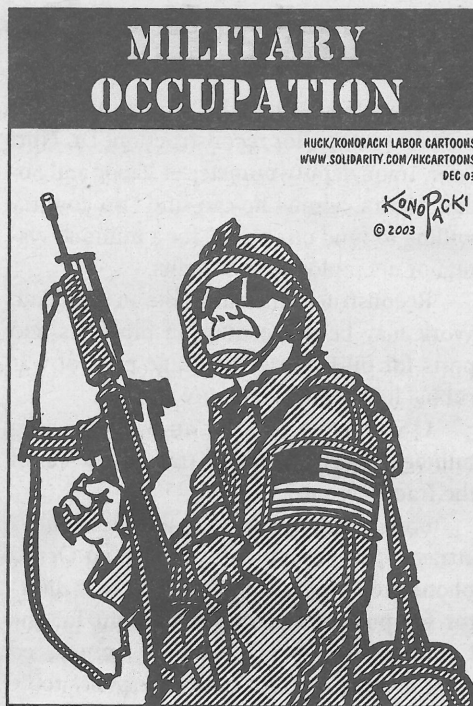
Local television proved to be even worse, as clips of the disturbances in Seattle were shown over and over again on the evening news, along with sound bites promising destruction from the most outlandish looking among the prospective protestors – persistently identified as "anarchists," although I heard none refer to themselves this way. Professors, clerics, union members, retirees and other respectable participants were hardly ever to be seen. After a few weeks of this conditioning, it was not hard to see how viewers

might reach the conclusion that Miami was about to be invaded by a hostile aliens from the planet Anarchy "in another galaxy far away," rather than visited by groups of their fellow Americans wanting only to express their peaceful and public disapproval of a plan they believed would do them and their children serious harm.

Looking at the program put out by Civil Society, the umbrella group organizing the protests, made it clear that demonstrations and marches composed only a small portion of the week's scheduled events. There were far more forums, teach-ins, workshops and other gatherings, where people could discuss "dangerous" subjects like corporate globalization and the assault on the environment, sustainability and democracy, labor and gender, and defending water as a public good and a human right, among others.

As far as I could determine, however, the media were notable by their absence from these assemblies, having found street commotions so much more exciting. Covering those stories might have required a consideration of the issues they raised, something obviously beyond the media pale. While the *New Times*, Miami's "alternative" newspaper, provided some analysis of the issues the conference might have to deal with, it provided no information about where these alternative gatherings were being held or what subjects would be considered. Civil Society was reduced to taking out small display ads in the back pages among the escort service blurbs in order to get its message out.

Both mainstream and "alternative" media, however, were tireless in their efforts to turn "The Magic City" into "Baghdad by the Bay," doing an outstanding job of scaring themselves with their own bogeymen. The *Miami Herald*, Associated Press, CNN and *Sun-Sentinel*, among others, were happy to provide journalists to be "embedded" within the police, complete with helmets, body armor and gas masks, as if they were covering a



war. Those not embedded were left to fend for themselves in this "war" amid hails of "nonlethal" police missiles, showers of pepper spray and clouds of tear gas.

If there was any consistent message sent out by all these preparations, it was to demonize the protestors and, by implication, protest itself – a rather strange activity for institutions that depend for their very lives on the First Amendment. To hear the media tell it, anyone going downtown during those days was asking for trouble and should not be surprised if he found some. Sensible people should stay home and keep quiet.

Yet, without making any excuse for the police riot that occurred when their chief decided to turn downtown Miami into a free fire zone, it is safe to say that police officers read the newspapers and watch television like the rest of us and have no built-in immunity to media fear mongering. It is quite possible that many sincerely believed they were being sent into desperate battle against a savage horde bent on the ruin of civilization. When this menace failed to materialize, their built-up anxiety and anger, fed by the antics of a

few itinerant street skirmishers as well as Chief Timoney's harangues, found an outlet in assaults on peaceful demonstrators who had no thought of being violent themselves.

Now that the media have begun to find their own minions among the arrested, bruised, beaten and, in the case of one cameraman, nearly killed, some have begun to treat the police response to the protests with more skepticism, although they have yet to examine their own provocative role in these disturbances. While the *Herald* was delighted to run a full-page "community announcement" celebrating the "success" of the FTAA conference on Sunday, Nov. 23, the *New Times* has published several major stories detailing police mistreatment of its reporter and others unwise enough to be downtown during these "days of (police) rage," and other outlets are beginning to get the message.

It remains to be seen, however, whether our media have learned anything that might be useful in covering the next mass protest more responsibly and in ways less likely to turn it into street theater destined to give Miami yet another black eye.

Miami police riot as FTAA advances...

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small groups of people escape through back alleys. Miami residents came up to us and said that they wanted to join, but were afraid the cops would use real bullets on them.

"It was like a war-zone with clouds of tear gas, and protestors limping away from the police shouting 'medic, medic,'" said another protestor I spoke to. "Four or five cops would descend on one person and whack them with their clubs or shoot them with tasers. I saw one person get pushed onto the ground whereupon the police pressed a stun-baton against his back and held it there."

The following day Wobblies joined about 100 others for a peaceful vigil outside the jailhouse to show solidarity with those arrested. FW Gross and I stood at the front of the crowd with a red and black flag donated to us by New Jersey Wobs. I showed the police my wounds, inflicted the day before, and they just laughed and pointed their weapons at us. After about an hour the vigil was completely surrounded by riot cops who outnumbered us at least two-to-one. After ordering us to disperse, which most of us did, they tear-gassed and opened fire on the crowd, specifically targeting medics and legal observers. They prevented many from leaving and harassed and arrested folks as they were walking away. More than fifty people were arrested at the jail solidarity vigil.

In total 282 protestors were arrested and brutalized in Miami jails, including at least two IWW members. There were cases of beatings, sexual assault and dousings with ice-cold water and pepper-spray. People of color, queer and transgender prisoners were disproportionately targeted. Arrestees were also denied access to attorneys, visitation rights, veg-



etarian or vegan food, and essential medical attention. A number of those arrested have been charged with various felonies.

On a positive note, there was a tremendous amount of community support for the protests. Despite the intense police propaganda prior to the protests, all the local residents we spoke to said they supported us. One woman, who owned a middle-eastern restaurant we frequented, said there were constant reports on the local TV stations regarding "bomb scares" and other "threats" protestors posed to the city. After she met and talked with us she told us that the news reports about the "protestors coming to Miami to destroy the city" were all wrong.

FW Porter was deeply impressed by the protestors' organization, especially the convergence center where much of the discussion and planning for direct action took place.

FW Dannenberg said he was "proud to represent the IWW in Miami." At one point he and another Chicago Wob held the IWW

banner, which read "Workers Do Not Kill Other Workers," as cover for others who were building barricades to stop the police attack. "It was beautiful to see the solidarity – a solidarity that embodies the IWW and our history, a solidarity with those struggling elsewhere in the world against globalization. It was a solidarity that strengthens our values and was real and backed-up in the streets."

The FTAA is a proposed trade agreement that aims to extend corporate control throughout the Western Hemisphere, coined by activists as "NAFTA on steroids." The agreement would further widen the ever-expanding gap between the rich and the poor, exploiting both labor and the environment in its wake. For information go to: www.stopftaa.org or www.ftaaimc.org.

I encourage IWW members to join others from around the globe in supporting those who were brutalized by the Miami police.

Call, fax, email elected officials to demand that they drop all charges, not share information collected with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, hold all officers responsible for their actions, and hold Timoney responsible for his initiating of violence against peaceful protestors and violation of civil liberties.

To send a free fax: <http://www.citizen.org/fax/background.cfm?ID=245&source=19>

Please call and write: Manuel A. Diaz, mayor, City of Miami, 305.250.5300 or 305.375.5071, email: mayor@miamidade.gov or mannydiaz@ci.miami.fl.us; Alex Penelas, mayor, Miami-Dade County, 305.829.9336 home or 305.375.5071 office; Miami Chief of Staff Francois Illas, Fillas@ci.miami.fl.us; State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle 305.547.0100; Chief of Police John Timoney, 305.579.6111 or 305.579.6565.

To support the ongoing legal effort, donate to the Miami Activist Defense by sending checks to NLG Gainesville, PO Box 2063, Gainesville FL 32602.

Christmas march against sweatshops

BY SOURDOUGH SLIM

The Upstate New York GMB updated Charles Dickens with a street performance at the annual Christmas Parade in downtown Schenectady Nov. 28. A take-off on the parade's theme of "cultural diversity" became an anti-sweatshop demo on the hoof.

The moving message for the holiday event was "A Christmas Carol: Updated." Ebenezer Scrooge boss types were dressed in Victorian tuxes and bowler hats and implored chained wage slaves to "work harder." The workers carried signage indicating their home country, pitiful wages and product produced – a culturally diverse but commonly bonded grouping by class.

"I need more money," the fat capitalists bellowed at the disposable workers whose placards fairly screamed out the cold, hard facts. One showed that some Haitian workers toil for 28¢ an hour sewing shirt collars for Disney. Toting whips and hoisting huge, overstuffed money bags, the Scrooges drew the crowd's attention.

Some parade goers supported the message, others were puzzled or shouted disapproval. "Goddamned Commies!" one crank erroneously shrieked. But there you are, no class consciousness and no appreciation for Situationist pranks.

Rainy conditions prompted parade officials to move things along at a quick, almost jogging pace. While not ideal to convey the anti-sweatshop message, a sizable crowd of about 14,000 was on hand. Wobs also distributed several hundred of their local *Black Cat Moan* newsletter, offering articles about sweatshop abuses, fair trade initiatives, and punky working-class culture.

continued next column

FTAA backers scale back plans to claim success

BY WALDEN BELLO

The United States is trying to paint the Miami meeting of the Free Trade of the Americas as a success, but the reality is that the anti-FTAA movement has forced treaty proponents to scale back their plans.

That the people were not cowed was evident at the "Gala for Global Justice" on the evening of Nov. 19. Opposition to the FTAA and people coming together for "another world" was the theme of event, which featured a program of music and speeches from activists from throughout the Americas.

Representing the U.S. labor movement in the program, Leo Gerard, president of the United Steelworkers union, declared, "We will not let them steal our sovereignty. This is not just about trade but also about investment and privileges for greedy investors and financiers. This fight is a fight for our children and grandchildren." He singled out the contribution of anti-sweatshop activists, telling the story of how earlier in the afternoon, "on the way to Guzman Park to attend the People's Forum, we saw a group of students surrounded by cops and searched. And guess what, hundreds of steelworkers surrounded the cops and told them to let the students go. And they did." And that brought the crowd to its feet.

The big news that day, however, was the scrapping of the original FTAA vision. "The U.S. wanted a binding comprehensive agreement with disciplines all the way through," said one official delegate from a Latin American country who has participated in the negotiations. "The draft ministerial declaration coming out of the Trade Negotiations Committee clearly is a retreat from that."

Instead, the draft proposes a "flexible" process where governments can decide to exclude some areas from FTAA negotiations for liberalization even as other governments negotiate liberalization in these areas. As the declaration states, "Ministers recognize that countries may assume different levels of commitments... In addition, negotiations should allow for countries that so choose, within the FTAA, to agree to additional obligations and benefits."

This will allow Brazil and the other members of the Mercosur trade area to withdraw

from negotiations on investment, intellectual property, government procurement, services, investment, competition policy and other areas they do not wish to subject to mandatory liberalization. At the same time, it will allow the U.S. to continue its policy of massive subsidization of its agriculture by not joining negotiations on agriculture. The result is what pundits have called "FTAA lite" or "FTAA a la carte."

Essentially, the ministerial declaration is the one tabled by Brazil at the Trade Negotiating Committee meeting in San Salvador last July. As the Latin American negotiator put it, "Brazil was saying, look, 2003 is different from 1994, when Clinton launched the FTAA negotiations. Free trade policies has brought about bad results throughout Latin America. People have ousted neoliberal governments. There was no way the U.S. was going to get the comprehensive free trade agreement it wanted today."

To the surprise of many, the U.S. agreed to the Brazilian compromise a few weeks before Miami. According to the Latin American negotiator, the alternative was another Cancun – referring to the collapse of the fifth

ministerial of the World Trade Organization – owing to widely disparate positions between Brazil and its allies and Washington, Canada and their supporters. This was not another high-profile setback the Bush administrator could afford coming into an election year.

Despite the U.S. stand-down, says Timi Gerson, a trade campaigner with Public Citizen, it will paint Miami as a success. "They'll say the train has not been derailed, as in Cancun, that it is leaving Miami with nine boxcars or negotiating areas intact. What they'll try to conceal is that those boxcars are empty because people throughout the Americas have refused to go aboard."

To counter Washington's spin on events while calling for continued vigilance among FTAA forces, the broad alliance Continental Campaign against the Americas issued the following statement shortly after the appearance of the draft declaration:

"We are witnessing in Miami the failure of the original FTAA project, and at the same time the emergence of a new and perhaps more dangerous proposal for negotiations.

"The United States will try and present the 'flexible' proposal to move the negotia-

tions forward as a success of the Ministerial Meeting. But this is only a facade... Miami has revealed that the United States has lost its capacity to convince people of the virtues of its 'free' trade project, and is using force to impose its objectives, trying to isolate the governments of the continent that are proposing a different vision."

To Brazilian trade organizer Fatima Mello, although the original FTAA vision has been disrupted, "So long as the FTAA's framework and basic principles remain intact, the imposition of neoliberal trade policies will remain a threat, so it is important to oppose even this watered-down version of the FTAA."

To cover its tactical retreat on the FTAA, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick announced that Washington would launch negotiations for bilateral free trade pacts with the Dominican Republic, Panama, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. To Sarah Anderson, trade analyst of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, the U.S. move is a confession of weakness. "They're admitting they can't get what they want via the FTAA, and that's because people and governments are resisting throughout the Americas."

"Education is how to make a human being feel dignity" Honduras, education and neoliberalism

BY PETER S. MOORE

Thirteen people gathered in the Ottawa home of an exiled Guatemalan teacher and labour activist Nov. 22 to hear teachers' activist Maria Rosario Avila speak about the World Bank-promoted commercialization and privatization of Honduran public schools.

This commercialization extends to vocabulary and job titles; for example, school principals are now known as "managers" and students are referred to as "clients." Coca-Cola and Pepsi see Honduran schools as marketplaces, with the two multinationals competing to sign exclusive marketing deals with schools in order to "poison the little children" with their products, said Avila.

Avila is a member of the Colegio Profesional de Superacion Magisterial Hondureño (COLPROSUMAH), a union founded in 1963 and now representing 25,000 primary, secondary, college and university teachers. Avila became its first woman president in 1986. She is currently an advisor in the union's new "research for transformation" unit. Since the Honduran government does not conduct research into the teaching profession, her union decided to investigate ways to "better the conditions of life for the people" for itself.

Avila said educators in Honduras are at grave risk of losing control over their profession. Teachers are leaving or retraining, and refusing assignments to rural schools because working conditions are so poor.

The World Bank's proclaimed emphasis on "community control" over education is illusory, and in effect privatizes the public education system. She noted that communities are hiring young women with a Grade Six education to teach six grades in one-room classrooms, working conditions which most trained teachers would find difficult.

To counter the World Bank argument that education is a tool for preparing labour for the marketplace, Avila's union promotes its own vision of an education system. We want to promote the "social quality" of people, she said. "Education is how to make a human being feel dignity."

According to World Bank 2002 figures, 23.8 per cent of Hondurans 15 and older are illiterate. Honduras is a country of 6.8 million people. The World Bank first became involved in Honduras' education sector with a teacher training and school construction program in 1973. Following that program, the lending agency decided the education problem in Honduras was structural and began to train the education ministry how to run an education system. Its most recent program

ended in 2002 with an objective "to improve the quality of learning and student performance, inspire better teaching, increase school attendance, and create more effective learning conditions."

One way to improve student performance, according to the World Bank, is the imposition of national exams. While claiming not to be setting the curriculum and allowing for community control, the national government does set the agenda through these exams. Frequently the exam designers are private companies based in the United States.

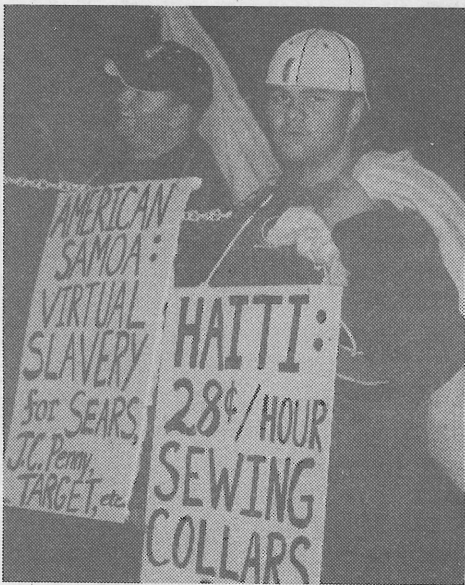
Requiring students to pass these exams changes the way teachers teach, moving them away from the process of learning and understanding how to think. Instead, it forces students into the less effective "sit, read and listen" method, said Steve Stewart of CoDevel-

opment Canada, a cross-border international union solidarity organization which sponsored Ms. Avila's trip to Canada.

The current education system "puts the brakes on innovation and creativity" for both teachers and students, said Avila. "They are instrumentalizing our profession."

Honduras is one of many countries in Central America facing the privatization and commercialization of their profession. "When I speak to a Salvadoran or Guatemalan or any other Central American fellow teacher, it is the same situation because we are in the United States' sphere of influence."

Avila's union is getting ready for more struggle for the minds of young Hondurans. Nov. 3, the World Bank and Honduran government announced a \$50 million deal as part of its "Education For All" by 2015 initiative.



"We were able to provide a foil to passive consumerism with our troupe," local IWW delegate Greg Giorgio said. The costume coordinator for the event, FW Pete Tsaffaras liked the street theater aspect. "I enjoyed the look of confusion on some of the faces," he added. "For a minute, their consumerism was in question there."

The Upstate NY IWW has been active with anti-sweatshop activities for the last five years. For copies of the *Black Cat Moan* or other resources, please contact them through the IWW directory.

Santas slay Aussie PM

Six Santas marched on the Australian prime minister's official residence Dec. 15, to demand full protection of workers' rights. The six transport workers in full Santa suits carried sacks labelled "John Howard's empty promises." The Transport Union Choir led a caroling session at the gates.



Steelworkers demand investigation

The United Steelworkers of America is calling for a Congressional investigation into "a massive police state," created in part with federal funds, to intimidate union members and other critics of the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas.

"Last week, the fundamental rights of thousands of Americans ... were blatantly violated, sometimes violently, by the Miami police, who systematically repressed our Constitutional right to free assembly with massive force, riot gear and armaments," said USWA President Leo W. Gerard in a letter to Congressional leaders.

"It is condemnable enough that a massive police state was created to prevent American citizens from directly petitioning FTAA negotiators for redress of their grievances," Gerard said in the letter. "It is doubly condemnable that \$9 million of federal funds designated for the reconstruction of Iraq were used toward this despicable purpose."

Gerard said that Miami police chief John Timoney should be fired, all charges against peaceful demonstrators should be dropped, and a Congressional investigation into the Miami police department's systematic repression should immediately be launched.

"To do less would be to endorse homeland repression in the guise of homeland security," Gerard's letter concluded.



According to the recent renderings from the Plute Press, the administration of Georgie the Tush wants to block a group of American troops from collecting millions of dollars in frozen Iraqi assets which they won last summer in a federal court ruling against the government of Saddam Hussein. This was awarded as compensation for having been tortured in Iraqi prisons during the Persian Gulf War of 1991.

So far, Tushie has been getting his way, although there is little publicity of this move nor any inclination to do so. The administration's rationalization is that frozen Iraqi bank accounts in Freedomland are needed for reconstruction of that war-ravaged country, and that the judgment won for the tortured GIs should be overturned.

Draftees of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your generals! I have certain doubts if this money is going to the families who have been bombed out of their homes or paying the funeral expenses of those who didn't survive the bombings. Is it going to pay for the medical expenses of the kids suffering from disease and malnutrition from being bombed into a previous century? Methinks the ordinary Iraqi population are not any less expendable to Tushie than they were to Saddam Hussein. More likely, the reconstruction will be for the bank accounts of the Iraqi big shots. Don't be surprised if Saddass emerges from obscurity to become an advisor in some future Freedomland adventure.

Draftees of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your generals! The amount that the erstwhile tortured soldiers are suing the Iraqi government for is a drop in the bucket compared to what the administration wants to send back to Iraq. The claim is that these funds are needed to bring stability, but even after the war is officially over the occupying soldiers are still being picked off by the locals and body bags continue to be sent back to Freedomland.

Draftees of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your generals! The hosts of innocent Iraqis blown out of existence were but mere expendabilities to Saddass Hussein in order to fulfill his ambitions, as the body bags returning to Freedomland are expendable to Tushie as he carries out the bidding of his unseen manipulators as the prices at the local supermarket put the space missiles to shame.

Terrorists are, in the president's words, "enemies of the civilized world." (¡Mira quién habla!) So writes a columnist in a recent *Washington Post*. Said columnist goes on to say, "But what makes the world civilized is its adherence to the rule of law, its insistence that it will not attack adversaries, however evil, unless first attacked by them [how about Wounded Knee and Sand Creek, to name but two in Freedomland's history?], its reliance on multilateral cooperation and international courts rather than unilateral military strength and the right of the strongest." Sounds terrific, but what major state power can really claim to adhere to such principles? What political entity is innocent of violating them? The history of us two-leggeds on this earth is a tragic history of the strong preying on the weak. I like the word "international," but the word "courts" sticks in my craw, knowing the function of courts under our present economic system. Take the trials of Joe Hill and Leonard Peltier, for example.

As long as we have the present system, things will proceed in the usual messed-up way. When we two-leggeds acquire the self-preservatory wisdom of the so-called lesser creation, and return to a society that is administered from the bottom up instead of from the top down, we shall truly have multilateral cooperation. That means we must organize so that workers have control over their own destiny.

Draftees of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your generals!

— C.C. Redcloud

UFCW undercuts California strikers

The United Food and Commercial Workers Union continues to reach new contracts with Albertson's, Kroger and Safeway grocery chains across the United States, undermining an increasingly desperate struggle by some 71,000 Southern California grocery workers.

Just before Thanksgiving, the Teamsters announced they would begin honoring picket lines and the UFCW dispatched pickets to several regional distribution centers. Some area landlords have offered free apartments to strikers as support for the workers grows, according to the Dec. 4 *Desert Sun*.

They may need it, UFCW locals have slashed strike benefits – from a maximum of \$300 a week to \$100 for workers walking the picket lines at least 20 hours a week.

UFCW members went on strike against Safeway-owned Vons and Pavilions stores Oct. 11. Ralphs and Albertsons, which are covered under the same labor contract, locked out their union employees when the strike began.

The union initially picketed all three chains, but then stopped picketing Kroger-owned Ralphs stores in a failed attempt to divide the companies, which have agreed to pool their losses from the strike. While Ralphs distribution centers are now being picketed, there are no picket lines in front of those stores and the UFCW is inviting consumers to patronize the scab-staffed stores.

Meanwhile, 3,300 striking Kroger work-

ers in West Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio ratified a new contract Dec. 11, by a 976-780 vote, ending a two-month standoff. Some 4,000 Indiana Kroger workers have been working without a contract for weeks, as the UFCW avoids bringing pressure on the company.

Kroger's and Safeway's stock prices have slumped as losses from the strike mount, but management shows no sign of compromising on its demand to gut workers' health benefits. Safeway has told market analysts that it plans to slash \$45 million from its health care benefit premiums next year, even as insurers continue double-digit premium increases.

Rail engineers merge with Teamsters union

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the U.S.'s oldest railroad union, has announced plans to merge with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

The 59,000-member BLE will become the Teamsters' rail-transportation division, and expand its jurisdiction to include conductors, brakemen and other railroad workers. This will increase conflicts between the BLE and the much larger United Transportation Union, which represents most rail workers.

The Association of Flight Attendants, the U.S.'s largest union of flight attendants, said it will merge with the Communications Workers of America. The AFA, which represents some 36,000 attendants at 26 airlines, has lost 10,000 members in recent years.

Immokalee Farmworkers Launch Radio Consciencia

BY C. LEVINE

Activists from the Prometheus Radio Project of Philadelphia, including two members of the Philadelphia IWW GMB, joined community radio activists from around the country from December 5-7 in Immokalee, Florida, to participate in a weekend of multilingual workshops and station construction. The "Radio Barnraising" culminated in the first on-air broadcast of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' (CIW) *Radio Consciencia*. For three days farmworkers, unionists, and radio activists gave and participated in workshops on sub-

jects ranging from using popular education in organizing to raising an antenna.

The CIW is a grassroots labor organization which fights against conditions of debt slavery and violence in the fields of rural Florida. They are best known for their boycott campaign against Taco Bell.

Radio Consciencia will serve the farmworkers of Immokalee by broadcasting music, international labor news, and the voices of workers struggling to improve their conditions, in their languages. *Radio Consciencia* will be streaming online soon, and gratefully accepts music donations.

Info: www.ciw-online.org & www.prometheusradio.org

Fight for shorter Hours



UK faces overtime epidemic

UK workers will put in more than £23 billion of unpaid overtime this year, according to a report by the Trades Union Congress which found that some 5 million people work an average of seven hours and 24 minutes without pay every week – worth £4,500 a year.

Professional staff were averaging nine hours 36 minutes a week extra. 150,000 craft workers were averaging an extra six hours a week, and 70,000 plant and machine operatives were doing an additional five hours 36 minutes of unpaid work.

The TUC has launched an online calculator to show people the hours they should work and what they lose in unpaid overtime.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "Britons work the longest hours in Europe, and these figures show that much of it is unpaid overtime. ...

"Given that workers in much of the rest of Europe work fewer hours, yet produce and earn more, are there not hard questions to ask about the quality of UK managers?"

Overtime rules due soon

The U.S. Labor Department is expected to issue final regulations eliminating overtime wages for millions of workers early this year, after Congress yielded to White House threats to veto a bill to block them.

German workers need shorter hours

BY HELMUT SPITZLEY,

DIE TAGESZEITUNG, GERMANY

The voices urging longer working hours are multiplying in the media and in political circles. Yet more and more is produced in an ever-shorter time with fewer and fewer workers. We will top last year's production record with this year's growth of "only" 0.5 percent.

The German economy is internationally competitive. Longer working hours are not necessary to maintain our level of prosperity or to safeguard social security systems. Rather, it is a question of how the labor and profit will be distributed between employers and employees, between the generations and the genders.

Fewer and fewer workers are needed because we work more effectively. Thus we face the choice between high unemployment and redistribution of existing paid work. An extension of working hours given high unemployment is simply bizarre.

The demand for longer working hours fundamentally opposes the goal of the compatibility of occupation and family and generational justice. Is it socially rational to force 60-year-old grandfathers to work longer when his 40-year-old daughter or his 20-year-old grandson is unemployed.

The advocates of longer working hours think in an economically shortsighted way. When working hours are extended, busi-

nesses need fewer personnel. The number of contributors to the social security systems falls, while spending for unemployment insurance increases. And longer working hours make people sick in the long

run and burdens the health and pension systems. ...

A glance at other European Union countries shows that low unemployment is not the result of long working hours. Quite the opposite seems true. Actual weekly working hours (including part-time) amount to 33.7 in Denmark and only 29.5 hours in the Netherlands (EU-average 35.5). At the same time the unemployment rate in these countries is low – 4.7 percent in Denmark and only 3.2 percent in the Netherlands. In Germany, however, people work longer at 36.1 weekly hours. The German unemployment rate at 8.2 percent is also higher.

Two currencies exist for prosperity: money and time. Instead of urging longer working hours, the variety of life interests should be considered. The challenge of politics, employees and employers is to take seriously widespread desires to work in a flexible or permanently shorter time.

A policy focused on a fair distribution of work and income counteracts social exclusion and existential fears spreading like an epidemic. Positive future expectations, material security and increased time prosperity are important if the delight of bringing children into the world should grow. What we need is shorter "full-time" work for everyone, a new culture of contentedness and an intelligent working hours policy oriented to the needs of people.

Overtime unsafe, unhealthy

Overtime among workers in extended hours operations rose to an average of five hours a week for the first eight months of 2003, according to a report from management consultant Circadian Technologies.

"Rather than hiring people back as the economy improves and demand picks up, employers are relying on fewer people to put in more time to get the job done," says Alex Kerin, author of the report. Kerin does not object to overtime, but says "Excessive overtime ultimately results in lower productivity, more fatigue-related accidents and injuries, costly increases in absenteeism and turnover, and higher employer medical costs."

The report is based on a survey of some 550 U.S. businesses and institutions running beyond the hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Kerin says the financial and social costs of excessive overtime are likely to escalate as extended hours operations become even more prevalent. Today, 24 million Americans, half of whom are in professional or white-collar occupations, regularly work irregular schedules, night shifts or extended hours positions. Such operations enable companies to attain lower unit costs, shorter supply chains, and better asset utilization. But they also incur higher social costs than traditional daytime operations – including higher accident and illness rates, employee turnover and lower productivity from fatigued workers.

"If U.S. labor is to be reborn it must be linked with workers around the world..."

BY BILL FLETCHER, JR.

Good evening. I am honored to be here this evening. By way of preface, let me say that I believe that it is appropriate that we hold this conference on the 34th anniversary of the murder of Black activist Fred Hampton. Fred Hampton was a young leader who was attempting to base and expand the Black Panther Party in the Black working class, an orientation which made him particularly dangerous to the forces of oppression and may have been a contributing factor in his murder. We continue to mourn his being ripped away from us, and we should recognize that this conference honors his memory.

In the interests of keeping my remarks brief I would like to make two points:

One, there will be no renaissance of organized labor in the USA unless we disentangle, if not cut the fundamental trip wire of U.S. politics: the race card.

The decline in the strength of organized labor and the rise of the political right reflects the deep split in the U.S. working class. The use of race in the California recall and the playing on the fear of the growing number of Latinos, or if we go back to George H.W. Bush's use of Willie Horton in the '88 election, all illustrate the deep seated racist fear on the part of whites of those of us of color.

It reflects the ability of capital to manipulate the competition within the working class in order to guarantee continued supremacy. In recent times this situation has been fur-

Race and labor conference

More than 250 rank-and-file unionists, union officials and scholars participated in a conference on race and labor held in New York City Dec. 4 and 5.

Workshops addressed organizing black and immigrant workers, coalition building, building an anti-racist labor movement, the attack on civil rights, and the need to link issues of globalization, race and labor.

These remarks were delivered by Trans-Africa Forum president (and former AFL-CIO staffer) Bill Fletcher as part of the opening panel.

ther complicated by interethnic rivalry, with African-North Americans often fearing the influx of Latino immigrants, and Latinos being actively encouraged to dissociate themselves from anything Black. Both groups find themselves engaged in a competition for the mantle of who will be the largest minority, with the operative word being minority.

Yet organized labor acts as if it can ignore race. It acts as if it can appeal to common economic issues and that this will lead to unity. It acts as if everyone knowing that the standard of living of the average U.S. worker declined for more than 20 years is enough for us all to come together, grab our torches and pitchforks and storm the barricades.

This is the USA, and it does not work that way. Race, in the USA is so fundamental to

capitalism that it cannot be separated out, a point that Manning has made time and again, and I echo. It also works its way into the leadership of organized labor in terms of how decisions are made and who is at the table. Unfortunately we have seen in the last 10+ years the emergence of many white labor progressives, people generally of good intent, who seem to believe that they can speak on behalf of people of color and that they are somehow inoculated against racism.

We need no condescending saviors. We need to be part of our own liberation.

My second point: the crisis of organized labor in the USA cannot be resolved short of a new form of unionism that is global in content. Organized labor in the USA has, for the most part, played a despicable role internationally, serving as the hatchet man for the U.S. government in supporting coups and other destabilization efforts, including against legitimate labor movements.

Much of this changed with the presidency of John Sweeney, but there remains a problem in the way that the U.S. trade union movement looks at international situation and our role. We permit our members, officers and staff to believe that they have more in common with a U.S. citizen who is the CEO of some U.S.-based corporation than they do with a South African auto worker. We permit our members and potential members to believe that a tragedy that strikes the USA is always and in every case, more egregious than

anything that has happened to anyone else on this planet. We allow ourselves to be suckered into perverse forms of patriotism that call for us to put on hold our struggles with domestic tyrants in the name of walking lock step into who knows what, with you know who.

If U.S. labor is to be reborn it must be linked with workers around the world. We must find ways of strategizing with South Africans, Brazilians, Bengalis, French, Jamaicans and Canadians. We must think outside of our borders and recognize that the material basis for international working class unity is greater than it has ever been in history. This unity must be translated into new forms of organization, but more importantly into a new consciousness about our obligations.

The notion of "an injury to one is an injury to all," a notion all but forgotten even here in the USA, must reemerge as our guide for addressing the demands of all those facing the juggernaut of capital. We can no longer afford the luxury of ignoring world events, the abuse carried out by multinational corporations, or the tragedies conducted in our name, as if we are not affected. A cry in Bangladesh by a teen age factory worker must become a cry that resonates within each of us, not just because what is happening is morally wrong, but because we have reached the state of awareness that what happens over there can have ripple effects here.

I actually think that it was correct to elaborate the equation from the 1960s: you are either part of the problem or part of the solution! For workers, for the trade union movement, there really is no middle ground. Thank you.

Study shows discrimination rampant in temp industry

A recent study by the Impact Fund documents that racism in the workplace is persistent and overwhelming. Researchers sent trained pairs of black and white job applicants to temporary employment agencies in Los Angeles and San Francisco, finding a "significant preference" for white applicants over higher-qualified African Americans.

Agencies favored white applicants by a ratio of 4-to-1 in Los Angeles and more than 2-to-1 in San Francisco. Whites were offered more interviews, offered higher salaries, and were more likely to be offered coaching or suggestions for improving resumes.

Human Rights Day actions...

continued from page 1

it must post a notice saying the practice is illegal. It also must pay lost wages, but can subtract pay earned from a new job after the worker was fired. A worker who appeals a firing typically will not get his job back for three years or more.

Dec. 10 commemorates the anniversary of the ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The declaration "guarantees" the right of people in every nation to organize into unions and undertake collective action to defend their interests.

But while U.S. workers have the legal right to form unions, employers routinely block their efforts with threats, coercion and intimidation. One-quarter of private sector employers fire at least one worker during a campaign to form a union, according to research conducted by Cornell University's Kate Bronfenbrenner, who also found that almost all private-sector employers – 92 percent – force employees to attend closed-door meetings to hear antiunion propaganda.

March for Women's Lives

Women from across the U.S. will march for freedom of choice April 25th in Washington, D.C. The march is in response to attacks on abortion rights, including recent legislation banning some abortion procedures, gag rules on federally funded family planning agencies, drastic cutbacks in family planning, cut-offs in Medicaid funding, etc. An organizing kit is available at www.feminist.org.



continued from page 1

Class is not a concept invented by socialists to mesmerize workers. Class structure is a fact of life that has existed throughout history in almost every culture; and without a thorough understanding of how the powerful define that structure and how they use it to "control the beast," workers cannot defend themselves. Any attempt at leveling the playing field is seen by the ruling class as dangerous to their position of power.

Labor unions, civil rights organizations, women's rights movements, progressive politicians – all are seen as dangerous vanguards of "the beast." The term "beast" was used by Alexander Hamilton when he wrote that democracy could be tolerated if the "beast" (we, the people) could be kept in its place while educated gentlemen like himself actually made the decisions. I recently heard the term used again by a right-wing economist when he said that 70 years of socialist legislation could only be dismantled by "starving the beast." Method? Drastically cut taxes for the wealthy, ensuring a huge deficit, so that social programs would have to be eliminated due to lack of funds. Recognize the policy?

The IWW became a primary target of the ruling class in the early 1900s because the IWW understood that the only power that could defeat the ruling class was international class consciousness. Nothing frightens the owning class more than the idea that workers might jointly withdraw their labor. No system can survive long without our labor. Violence, on the other hand, is the rulers' game. The ruling class has used violence since the class structure emerged to dominate us and they know how to deal with it if violence becomes our defense. If we do not choose it, they will send provocateurs into our ranks to fan our frustration and impatience into violence that can be dealt with quickly and easily. Witness the Weather Underground. Ruling classes understand the power of class consciousness. They encourage it in their own class, but panic at any sign of it in ours.

I think most business labor functionaries still believe in their illusion of a "middle

class" and don't know what is happening to their disintegrating pipe dream. But it was not only the surrender of class awareness that sealed the fate of business unionism. Business unions have also surrendered democracy and adopted the authoritarian structure of our corporate friends. Whether we are discussing friendships, marriages, families, political parties, governments or unions, history teaches us that the reaction created by resentment to enforced discipline contains the seeds of eventual self-destruction.

Let's dream a little. I do that a lot, don't I. Let's dream that IWW philosophy; i.e., international class solidarity, prevailed after the Palmer Raids rather than business unionism as we've come to know it. Would there be a problem sending work offshore? No. That would have happened much sooner. However, sharing work would not have been done to exploit defenseless labor for the benefit of the rulers. It would have happened as an act of solidarity in order to use the most efficient means of production, with the benefits of that increased production to be shared by all. We would not fear it.

I dream that if IWW philosophy of class solidarity had prevailed, racism and sexism would not divide workers as it does now. Racism might still exist in pockets, as it may be rooted deeply in our subconscious as remnants of tribal fears. But I believe racism and sexism would steadily atrophy if the concept of class solidarity was understood. You do not have to love someone to understand that helping them is in your own self interest. Nor is a doctorate degree required to understand that tribal fears would be nothing more than paranoia in a cooperative world.

So what is to be done? We should begin organizing the work that *can not* be sent offshore. Hell, industrial work was terrible until the workers organized and changed the conditions. We need to begin all over again to organize and improve today's "terrible" jobs, to help workers organize around the globe and stop crying about a loss of "good" factory jobs. Many factory jobs would come back if we were organized internationally sim-

ply because it would be more efficient to produce many of those goods here if the raw materials are more readily available.

We must bring the concept of an "international working class" back into our daily vocabulary. Business unions are terminal because they failed to keep this "class" concept alive, and future organizing will suffer the same fate if this reality is not understood. In other words, we need to bring the IWW back into the discussion of labor's future. Many workers around the globe are waiting for us to stop complaining and start organizing.

But be prepared. The ruling class is betting that can't happen. They are betting we will destroy our chances with petty political infighting, or frustration-driven experiments with violent tactics, or personal ego needs to control events, or just plain greed. They will send us provocateurs to light those fires. Business union bureaucrats have annual six figure incomes to protect. Some workers who have benefitted from a slightly privileged position at the expense of the impoverishment of others may still have pipe dreams of a "middle class" to protect, in spite of the evidence all around them that the ruling class no longer needs that particular illusion for its security.

Are we ready to start organizing all over again? I don't know, but here's another toast to the dream.

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Review: Youth at work – low wages, few rights

REVIEWED BY JOSHUA FREEZE

Youth at Work: The Unionized Fast-food and Grocery Workplace, by Stuart Tannock. Temple University Press, 2001.

"The reason youths work in the low-end service and retail sectors in North America has a lot to do with government, employer and trade-union policies and actions that, when they don't simply abandon youth workers in the labor market, actively discriminate against them."

Workers' struggles over the years have led to laws prohibiting many kinds of employment discrimination in North America. At least on paper, the boss generally can't prejudice decisions on race, gender, religion, disability or old age. It is, however, perfectly legal to discriminate based on youth. Stuart Tannock, in *Youth at Work*, examines how that discrimination allows employers to profit off the low wages and poor working conditions of the young.

Tannock compares two work forces: grocery store workers at three chains in a U.S. city he calls "Box Hill" and Canadian fast food workers at the "Fry House" chain in "Glenwood." He uses pseudonyms for all the workers, cities and stores. The unions he calls "Local 7" in Box Hill and "Local C" in Glenwood. Anyone who has never worked in grocery or fast food gets an introduction to work they've never wanted to do – the fast pace, the stress, the raging customers, the short paychecks, and the regular reminders anytime there is a free moment that, "If there's time to lean, there's time to clean."

Younger workers are generally assumed to be unreliable, lazy and poor workers with no sense of responsibility. While there certainly are some who fit this description,

Tannock points out there are plenty who don't and provides numerous examples from both sites of workers' practice: "Some stores and departments, in fact, are able to keep running on tight budgets largely because their workers are willing and able to come up with ad hoc repairs, innovations and adjustments so they can do their jobs effectively." As one worker in Glenwood put it, "You managers could listen to us, get some advice from us, 'cause we know what's going on in the store."

The workers in this book are better off than most in their industries because they are union, but they still don't escape the penalty for being young. The Fry House workers make more than minimum wage, but they are still understaffed, encouraged to work off the clock or skip breaks, and penalized for following company policies. The Box Hill workers are even worse off. Their union has allowed for permanent youth positions like baggers and stockers that are exempt from many benefits of the contract, including regular raises and premium pay for unscheduled overtime. As Tannock points out, this type of multi-tier contract has ramifications far beyond the service industry in slashing what younger workers can ever expect.

Tannock interviewed many young workers, and lets them point out regularly in the book that for all the problems at work, they are still better off for having a union, but he doesn't leave it at that.

The youth in Local 7 are completely alienated from the union. The union has a sizable initiation fee and low-wage workers pay more

of their wages in dues. They are fined by the union if they do work outside their (boring) job description. There is virtually no steward system and if a union rep comes around, he inevitably goes immediately to the older workers or more likely into the manager's office. The union hall is difficult to get to without a car, but the local doesn't seem to want members there.

There are 12,000 members in Local 7, but the president told Tannock, "I wouldn't know what to do if a thousand people showed up for a meeting. I'd feel scared, like I must be doing something wrong." As Tannock tells it, "Low turnout at meetings can be interpreted by union staff as meaning that members must be reasonably happy." There is little outreach to workers in general around negotiations, and young workers' concerns about job conditions are consistently overruled in favor of financial gains for older full timers.

Local C, on the other hand, practices a very different form of unionism. Dues are based on hours worked and the initiation fee is low. Gains in the contract are spread across the work force. Their union encourages shops to elect stewards and most do. Most Fry House workers know someone who has been helped by the union, unlike the grocery workers. Although it is not large or wealthy, Local C offers steward trainings twice a year and encourages members to come to meetings. Unlike Local 7, it actively involves young members in all stages of negotiations.

This isn't to say Local 7 is perfect. There's still a tendency for staff to run things and there isn't any follow-up on the initial stewards train-

ing so some say they feel left to fend for themselves. There's no outreach to new members, and the union is often seen as just the steward – an improvement over the even greater distance in Local 7, but still problematic.

The last substantive chapter deals with time and shows how youth face the same pressure as workers always have. Bosses in the old days would change the clocks to get more work done for free. Now most people have watches, so the boss doctors the time card. He schedules too few staff, knowing young workers will not want to leave their friends in the lurch and will work through lunch and breaks or work late or early without punching in. Young workers often see a give-and-take in the question of time, but when asked detailed question, it is clear that the employer does a lot more taking than giving.

Tannock does a good job of showing the problems facing young workers and the particular issues facing young union members. The only downside of the book for most labor activists is that it is written primarily for academics, and not for unionists. This doesn't stop him from making excellent points on the value of certain kinds of unionism and certain strategies, but it does force him to be pedantic at times. If you are able to get past the first parts, however, he sounds a criticism of many of his academic cohorts that sounds remarkably like our criticism of business unionism: "Previous studies ... have looked everywhere but at the youth workplace itself for solutions to improve the conditions of youth work."

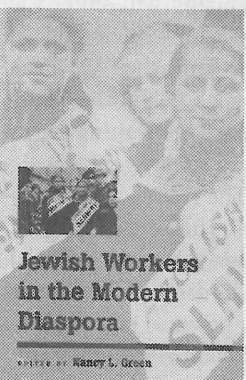
The solution to fixing the problems young people have at work is the same as the solution to fixing the problems everyone else has at work: fix the damn workplace.

Review: Jewish workers in the modern Diaspora

REVIEWED BY

RAYMOND SAUL SOLOMON

Nancy L. Green, editor, *Jewish Workers in the Modern Diaspora* (University of California Press, 1998) \$10 from IWW.



I would like to dedicate this review to the memory of the women workers killed in the Triangle Shirt-Waist fire of March 25, 1911, mainly because the exits were locked by the sweat-shop owners. Many girls jumped to their death.

World War I was very devastating for the Jews of Europe. [No, this is not a typo.] Although World War II was much worse, the First World War caused death, starvation, massacres and trauma for the Jews. Many became refugees. [I am not minimizing the death and suffering of others. In the first months of the Great War – the original name of the First World War – about 3 million Russian soldiers were killed, and over 20 million people in Soviet Russia were killed in World War II.] Jews in Europe looked to American Jews for help. They responded, as recorded in *Jewish Workers*:

"In the fall of 1914, Orthodox Jews launched the Central Relief Committee to aid Jewish war sufferers, followed by the wealthy uptown [German] Jews, who organized the American Jewish Relief Committee. Socialists and labor elements formed the People's Relief Committee the following year."

During the 1930s and World War II, Jews in Europe faced and suffered much more than during the Great War. Many Jews in America were among the many unemployed. People sought answers and leaders. One such leader was Franklin D. Roosevelt. Jewish workers and other workers supported Roosevelt because he was fighting against fascism, work-

ing to bring relief during the Great Depression, and introducing many reforms into the American economy. *Jewish Workers* documents the use of anti-Semitism by reactionary campaigns against Roosevelt. It quotes a 1936 editorial from the socialist *Jewish Daily Forward* strongly supporting his re-election:

"Tomorrow is finally the day. It will not only be a day of election, but a historic day.

"The magnates in America have conjured up the worst passions and awakened the lowest instincts. Fascism, Nazism, anti-Semitism, hatred of immigrants, lies, tricks. And if they are successful, it will be the biggest blow to democracy since Hitler came to power!

"This should not happen! This must not happen! Roosevelt must be re-elected!

"Every worker's vote must go to Roosevelt and only to Roosevelt."

Today, reactionary politicians, big businesses and the reactionary media are trying to undo Medicare, Social Security and union gains. The reactionaries of today are just as aware of the need to win elections, as were the reactionaries of yesterday. These reactionaries have deceived the American people into a war in Iraq. They have done this without any shame. Bush is raising money to be elected [notice I did not say "re-elected"] or re-selected. Think of the Americans killed and wounded in Iraq. Think of the psychological agony of their families. And then think about what has happened to the Iraqis. While this paragraph may seem a digression, I think it is an important one – the *Forward* editorial of Nov. 2, 1936, should resonate for us today.*

Radical Yiddish-language newspapers included *Forverts* [I have used the English name above]; *Freiheit* [Freedom], a Communist newspaper; and the *Frei Arbeiter Stimme* [Free Voice of Labor], an anarchist newspaper.

In addition to being expressive in Yiddish newspapers, Jewish worker radicals were active in many areas. *Jewish Workers* points to the war against white slavery – kidnapping of young women and forcing them into prostitution. Some "respectable" Jewish leaders in

the communities were white slavery practitioners. There were also Jewish slumlords and sweatshop owners. Thus, *Jewish Workers* also records the fight of the Jewish masses and radicals against these white slavers, slumlords and factory owners. There were many union struggles, and Jewish and Italian workers worked together very well. Italian and Jewish workers were side-by-side in the general strike of all garment workers in 1910.

Jewish workers also promoted the Jewish national liberation movement. As Nancy Green relates:

"Labor Zionism represented an attempt to synthesize the currents of international socialism and Jewish nationalism. The first Po'alei Zion group in America was founded by seven immigrant Jews in New York, in March 1903. Over the years the Labor Zionists participated in general Zionist activities such as the Jewish National Fund (JNF), but also conducted independent campaigns for their own Palestine Workers' fund."

Green quotes a Yiddish newspaper: "The Jewish National Fund has never received significant support from so-called big Jewish money. It has always aimed its fund-raising efforts at the poor popular masses." This land was meant to be in trust for the people in perpetuity, so that it could not be used for speculation and to guard against the introduction of capitalism and exploitation. "The fact that land bought by the JNF can never again be sold to anyone, but remains the permanent property of the people, as well as the fact that he who works the land owns it, have made the fund the most important national and social instrument of the Jewish people." (*Der Tag*, February 2, 1936)

You can gather interesting historical footnotes, such as that the different German states had different immigration policies, and that such historical movements as American Jewish radicals were merged into Roosevelt's New Deal and the Democratic Party.

The book covers many of the variations of left-wing Jewish radicals: left-wing Zion-

ists, right-wing labor Zionists, socialists and anarchists. Trotskyists and Communists were among them. It discusses masses of London's Jewish worker anarchists being led by the non-Jew Rudolf Rocker, a truly great man. In his book *London Years*, Rocker records his role in strongly protesting the pogroms in Kishinev, Russia, in 1903. Rocker also wrote about Peter Kropotkin's eloquent and moving speech at a different mass meeting, protesting the Czarist government-sponsored pogrom.

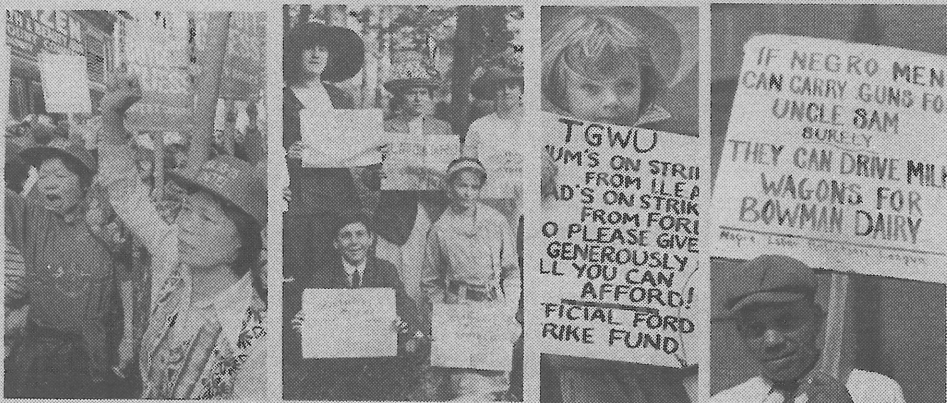
Jewish Workers discusses the sociology of demographic changes. "In the interwar period, Jewish immigrants and their offspring moved into new neighborhoods in the Bronx and in Brooklyn, until these boroughs became the most Jewish in the City." She also discusses Jewish immigration to Paris, Amsterdam and Berlin. She tells of the severe restrictions put on immigration, which affected the poor Jews in Eastern Europe. There are specifics on unionization.

Jewish Workers is a powerful mosaic, gathered from newspapers, pamphlets and personal stories – among other sources – interwoven by Green's commentary in italics. Knowing a great deal about the creation of books, I know that although *Jewish Workers* may seem to be an easy product to create, it took much work from the editor and others, including the collaborators and translators listed below.** There were translations from five languages. And it covers several parts of the world, including London, Buenos Aires, New York, Amsterdam, Paris, Warsaw and Berlin. I recommend this book to the readers of the *Industrial Worker*.

*George Orwell has spoken of "flyblown words," like in defense of democracy that can be used to lead the people of a country into war. Was not World War I fought "To make the world safe for democracy?"

**Patrick Altman, Edgardo Bilsky, David Cesarani, David Feldman, Ludger Hied, Selma Leydesdorff, Daniel Soyfer and Jack Wertheimer; and with translations from Yiddish by Daniel Soyfer, from German by Thomas Kozak, from Dutch by Wanda Boeke, from French by Lisa Greenwald and Nancy L. Green, and from Spanish by Rick Francis.

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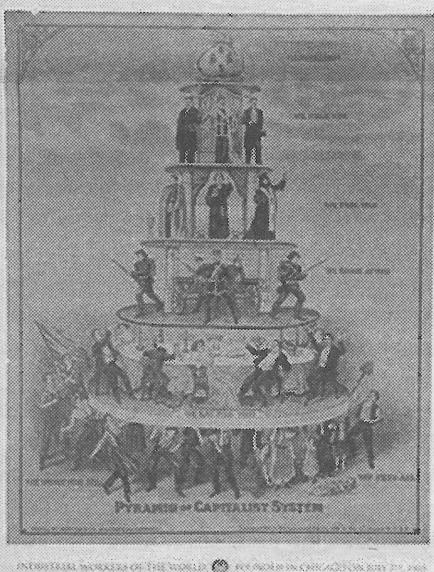
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180 pages, \$15.00

Jewish Workers in the Modern Diaspora edited by Nancy Green.
See review page 10. **256 pages, \$10.00**

Red November, Black November: Culture and Community in the Industrial Workers of the World by Salvatore Salerno
Salerno's book is about one of the most significant traits of the IWW: the union's use of cultural expressions like songs, poems and cartoons to educate and unify workers. Dozens of examples help us understand what mattered to the immigrants, artists, and Wobbly intellectuals whose work filled the IWW press.
220 pages, \$22.00

Triumph of the Commons

BY JONATHAN ELSBERG, CENTER FOR POPULAR ECONOMICS

One of the more attention-grabbing ideas that has crossed academic boundaries and entered into everyday language is the notion of the "tragedy of the commons." Made famous by late Professor of Human Ecology Garrett Hardin, the idea is not too complicated, very powerful – and rather alarming.

The tragedy describes a situation in which there is public access to a resource. It is to the advantage of each individual to use a little bit extra of the resource, but if all individuals do this simultaneously, the resource is ruined for everyone. Dozens of references to the "tragedy" ran in newspapers in just the last year, dealing with issues such as depleted fisheries, email spam, risky growth in hedge-fund investing, and worker migration and associated destruction of local communities.

While resources available "in common" sometimes have been tragically exploited, reality is (happily) more complicated. One aspect sometimes overlooked by pessimistic analysts is that there are different kinds of common resources. Some resources are totally open to all users, and are properly called "open access" rather than "commons." These are the ones most likely to suffer tragic overuse. The earth's atmosphere, and its ability to absorb global warming pollution, is one example.

Often, the "cure" recommended for these tragic commons is either strict government control or conversion into pure private property. Under the ruling ideology of our times, it is the latter that gets the most promotion.

However, many resources are held in common by a group which can sustainably use the resource without resorting to strict private property. Members of the group, be it a local community, professional organization or national society, control and share access to the resource, yet establish and follow rules of behavior that override greedy urges and keep individuals' use of the resource at an acceptable level. These successful cases of working social rules and norms are arguments against calls for knee-jerk privatization of common properties, or for total government control.

Some examples include the sharing of fishing zones in Alanya, Turkey; maintenance of acequia irrigation systems around New Mexico; and the Ozone Transport Commission NOx Budget established among eight northeastern U.S. states to reduce smog-related air pollution.

These are important lessons, because some potentially tragic commons cannot be fully privatized or put entirely into the hands of the government. For example, avoiding global warming will require extensive international cooperation (there is disagreement on whether this cooperation can be built from the ground up, or must be imposed by a central world power). Not only will the citizens and businesses of each country have to take responsibility for their CO2 emissions, but each government will have to help establish a working institutional framework for such responsibility within its borders. However, each government, business and individual faces the tragic temptation – allow all the others to control their CO2, while we fake compliance and reap the economic advantages.

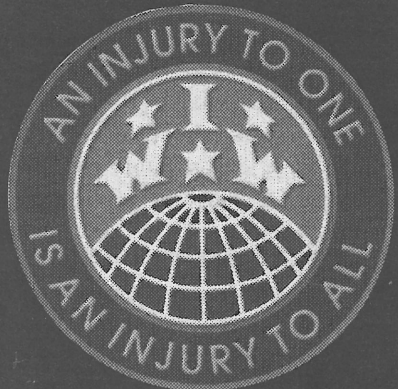
No international treaty will hold if the signers don't want to follow it. Only through combined dedication to the well-being of the whole, along with creative new institutions to guard against cheating, will individual community members make triumphant rather than tragic choices. It is through the study of past common property success and failures that we can learn to succeed more often.

References: Nives Dolžak & Elinor Ostrom, eds., *The Commons in the New Millennium*, MIT Press, 2003. (I especially recommend the chapter on Icelandic fisheries as an excellent analysis of a privatization scheme with mixed positive and negative results.)

Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162, 13 Dec 1968, 1243-1248.

This article is part of a weekly email series put out by the Center for Popular Economics.

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Unionists protesting outside Sisecam headquarters in Istanbul October 16

Turkish glass strike banned to "protect national security"

The Turkish government banned a major glass industry strike for two months Nov. 8, a day before 5,000 workers were set to strike 13 plants which belong to the Sisecam group. The governmental decree claims that the strike was a threat to "national security." This is the second time such a pretext has been used to block a strike in the industry. Under Turkey's infamous Article 33, the labor ministry can impose binding arbitration at the end of the two months if an agreement has not been reached.

The Kristal-Is union federation is appealing against the decree in the courts and to the European Commission (Turkey is a candidate for EU membership).

Sisecam, Turkey's leading manufacture of glassware which distributes its products throughout Europe, has dismissed some 353 workers as part of efforts to crush organizing efforts. Since Sept. 27, several of the dismissed workers and their families have been maintaining a vigil outside the Pasabahce factory in Eskisehir. Police attacked the protest Nov. 7, destroying workers' tents and briefly detaining some 100 workers.

African union rights under WTO attack

Unions in Commonwealth countries throughout Africa attributed increased violation of union rights in member countries to the adoption of the policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund at a conference on "Trade Union Rights in the Commonwealth" held in Nigeria.

Commonwealth Trade Union Council Director Annie Watson said: "Union rights are not a reality in the Commonwealth. Governments are failing to protect citizens from exploitation in the work place," pointing to Zimbabwe as a particularly egregious example.

Kwesi Adu-Amankwah, general secretary of the Ghana Trade Union Congress, said factories there are rarely inspected to ensure that legal standards are being enforced, and that the government has failed to compensate workers who lost their jobs as a result of IMF-dictated privatization.

In Nigeria, the government routinely violates agreements with unions. Laws restrict public sector workers' rights to organize. Like other commonwealth countries, Nigeria also denies workers in export processing zones the right to unionize.

Euro dockers win

As dock workers struck ports throughout Europe Nov. 19, the European Parliament narrowly rejected a proposal that would have allowed shippers to tear up union agreements throughout Europe, instead using seamen or scab crews to load and unload cargo.

When the Port Services Directive was first announced, the International Dockworkers Council responded with demonstrations and strikes from Algeciras to Pireo, Copenhagen to Marseilles, proving the dock workers' firm determination to defend their profession.

Many striking dockers rallied in front of the European Parliament building as the vote took place. Solidarity actions took place in Western U.S. ports, and in St. Johns, Canada.

Poland: Steel workers should run the works themselves

BY WORKERS INITIATIVE,
ANARCHIST FED. OF POLAND

The tragic situation of Silesia, the region of Poland where heavy industry and mining are concentrated, is caused mainly by government policies that ruin both industries. In the case of the mining industry, the government aims at liquidation because of the World Bank's dictate. In the case of the heavy industry, instructions from the European Commission on how much can be produced contribute to the closing of plants, depriving thousands of people of employment.

The government's only plan for rescuing heavy industry is looking for foreign investors, which is only a temporary rescue. Because of this, only the best and new manufacturing lines were included in the syndicate of Polish Steelworks. Foreign companies are interested only in gaining information about the market, seeing Poland as a perfect market for their overproduction. The privatized Steelworks are being run into the ground, as profits are transferred out of the country rather than invested into the enterprises.

The European Union, too, is suffocating from overproduction, leading to programs aimed at cutting back steel production and massive dismissals. The general strategy that steel corporations are following in the struggle for shrinking markets is a progressing process of capital concentration, creating bigger and bigger corporations. Ultimately, a few giant firms will divide the markets among them-

Indian unions plan general strike to defend labor rights

India's Central Industrial Trade Union opened its national congress Dec. 9 with a discussion of a recent Supreme Court decision that government workers have no legal right to strike, allowing the state of Tamil Nadu to fire thousands of striking workers.

The CITU voted to join a general strike called by government employee unions for Feb. 11, but will continue efforts to work with other union centers to develop a joint response. The INTUC and BMS union federations, affiliated to the Congress and ruling BJP parties, have criticized the general strike call. The AITUC federation will also join the strike.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has criticized the court ruling, but has taken no measures to restore workers' right to strike.

CITU President E Balanandan's report to the congress stressed the need to build stronger unity between Indian unions (each tied to a different political party), and to combat the effects of liberalization, privatization and globalization. While the government claims the Indian economy is booming, workers in traditional manufacturing industries suffer declining living standards as employers seek to boost profitability at workers' expense.

McDonald's workers in nine-month occupation

Workers in a St. Denis, Paris, McDonald's have been occupying the fast food restaurant since management fired an employee March 11 who had testified in behalf of workers during an earlier dispute. Although police attacked the occupiers May 30, management has been unable to obtain an eviction order against the workers, who have sold thousands of anti-McDonald's t-shirts from the restaurant to raise relief funds.

Strikes are also underway at several Pizza Hut outlets in the Paris area. Fast food and retail workers have mounted a wave of strikes since October 2001 to protest the precarious nature of their jobs and the low wages. Several now operate under union agreements. A major demand of these disputes has been equal status for equal work, with workers objecting to individual and "merit"-based pay systems and to lower pay for subcontracted and temporary employees.

selves, while smaller steel firms are absorbed and subordinated. The huge EU steel corporations have direct influence on political decisions not only on their governments, but also on the European Commission which fulfills their interests.

The European Commission suspended negotiations about gaining credits for reorganizing Polish heavy industry with international financial organizations at the demand of the EU steel corporations.

The Commission sees heavy industry in ten EU-affiliated countries, especially Poland, Czech Republic and Romania, as an enormous danger for EU steelworks, warning them that their road to EU membership requires radical reorganization and reduction of production levels. As many as two-thirds of workers – 200,000 – 250,000 workers – must be laid off. And the EU says it can not help finance the \$10 billion that will be required to reorganize the industry along the proposed lines.

A demand for limitation of production is no longer dressed in the ideology of free market, like in the case of mining or agriculture. No, the EU directly exposes their intentions, decreeing in writing how much every single foundry will cut production. And the Commission demands production be cut at the most economically effective and most advanced plants.

The government has ordered foundries to reveal full information about their production process to European Commission inspectors to facilitate this process. In exchange the European Commission suggests donations for social protection programs for dismissed foundry workers (they propose cutting 55,000 of the remaining 95,000 jobs), and credits from international financial institutions to finance privatization.

Some unions agree with the government's program of looking for foreign investors,

More strikes in China

BY CHINA LABOUR BULLETIN

Some 10,000 workers from the Xiangyang Automobile Bearing Company blocked roads and railway lines across Xiangfan City Nov. 18 and 19 in a protest aimed at pressuring the government to protect workers during privatization of the former state-owned company, a process that will cost many of them their jobs. Workers remain on strike, but the street protests were suspended after the Hubei provincial governor went to the plant to negotiate with the strikers. Authorities issued arrest warrants for ten workers alleged to have organized the protests, although no attempt to actually arrest them has been made.

The Xiangfan workers' protest was provoked by layoffs being implemented as part of the factory's economic restructuring, and a simultaneous move to privatize local housing. The government is offering very low severance benefits, while demanding that workers buy their homes (most of which workers built themselves) at market rates. In effect, this means that a couple who worked at the bearing plant for 20 years would receive combined compensation of around 30,000 Yuan after retrenchment, but would need to pay out 35,000 Yuan in order to remain in their home.

The factory also owes workers more than three years' worth of unpaid wages, social security benefits and housing subsidies. "We are fighting for our survival," one worker said.

Employees of the Zhengzhou Construction Machinery Group blocked the factory entrance Oct. 31 to protest government plans to transfer control over the factory's assets to a new management body on a zero-price basis. On Nov. 6 employees stopped production and blocked roads leading to the factory.

In a remarkable show of honesty, the local union chairman admitted that it was impossible for the official trade union to address the issue because the union was under the leadership of the Communist Party. He concluded, "It is impossible for the trade union in China [ACFTU] to act independently while the Communist Party is still around."

while others call for Poland to implement its own centralization and concentration scheme. Another idea to hand the industry over to workers and managers to operate, as was done in several American steelworks.

There is a long tradition of worker cooperatives, beginning in the 1840s. A pioneer was the "Foundry of Steelworks' Employees' Union" cooperative. Unfortunately these met with a backlash from private capital in the form of dumping, not giving credit, etc.

A second wave of American cooperatives popularized by Ira Stewart, an 8-hour day campaigner, and William Sylvis, chairman of the International Union of Foundry Workers, set up several foundries beginning in 1866. Unfortunately, American unions later abandoned the idea of workers' ownership for many decades until the 1980s, when steel workers came together to rescue bankrupt enterprises and save their jobs. Instead of simply giving concessions, many workers proposed taking over the enterprises and running them themselves.

Many firms rescued from bankruptcy by their employees proved successful, inasmuch as the initiative of people who are directly involved is necessary for a positive solution to steelworks' problems. The wealth located in the enterprise comes from the value elaborated by all workers and should be used in their interest, not in the interest of a narrow group of economic-political elites. Since the enterprise's work force best knows what is happening in the enterprise, it is best identified with the enterprise, which is their "workshop" and essential to their livelihood – that is why the reins of the workshop should be handed over to the employees.

Workers Party expels rep.s for defending retirement

Brazil's ruling Workers' Party has expelled four dissident congressmen for inciting public protests and lobbying against government attacks on retirement benefits.

Party critics are increasingly arguing that the government's economic orthodoxy, including a recent agreement with the International Monetary Fund, is merely a continuation of neo-liberalism. Another labor party, the PDT, recently quit the governing alliance, which increasingly relies on conservative parties to pass its legislative program.

Finns strike to protest growing unemployment

Hundreds of thousands of Finnish workers participated in protests against layoffs Dec. 12, with the country's largest employers suffering work stoppages for at least 15 minutes.

The largest single walkout was in Vaasa, where a thousand employees walked off the job from the Wärtsilä factory. Work also stopped for four hours in banks, Alko stores and social security (Kela) offices.

"Here, we run the unions"

An engineer at the Polar beer bottling plant in Havana was fired Dec. 5 for having signed the Varela Project petition which calls for democratization of the government.

Félix Cabrera had been chief engineer at the plant. At the meeting, Cabrera asked the officials assembled: "Where is the labor union, and whom does it represent?" only to be answered by the State Security major: "Here, we run the unions, and those who are against the Revolution don't have any rights to a union."

German "reforms" hit jobless

An economic reform package moving through Germany's parliament slashes corporate taxes, while the unemployed to accept any offered job, no matter how low the wages. The tax cuts would be financed largely by privatizing telephone and postal services.

AFL-CIO staff to work for free

Some 200 AFL-CIO employees are taking two days of unpaid leave in order to avoid layoffs, as the labor federation spends tens of millions on its largest-ever political campaign.